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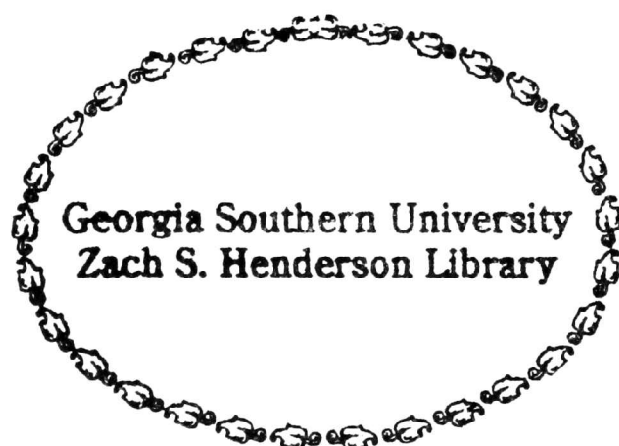
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IMPLEMENTING SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT
IN THE RURAL SOUTH: THE
PROCESS AND CHALLENGE

Linda Gail McQuaig



Implementing Site-Based Management
in the Rural South: The
Process and Challenge

A Dissertation
Presented to
The College of Graduate Studies of
Georgia Southern University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
Educational Administration

by
Linda Gail McQuaig
December 1996

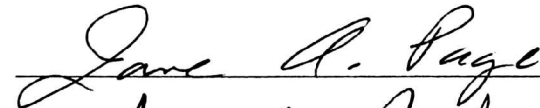


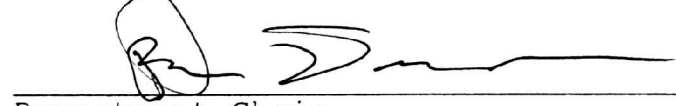
December 8, 1996

To the Graduate College:

This dissertation entitled "Implementing Site-Based Management in the Rural South: The Process and Challenge" and written by Linda Gail McQuaig is presented to the College of Graduate Studies of Georgia Southern University. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration.


Dissertation Advisor

We have reviewed this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:





Department Chair


Accepted for the College of Graduate Studies

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and soul mate, Jim. He has stood by me as I achieved each degree, and as I made each career change. He has not wavered in his faith of my abilities and has always encouraged me to achieve more. I will always be grateful for his support during this final degree. Now we can enjoy life again!

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A sincere thanks to the members of my committee: Dr. Jane Page, Dr. Bryan Deever, and Dr. Garth Petrie. My chair, Dr. Mike Richardson, provided much needed support and motivation throughout this effort. To him, I will be forever grateful. Thanks for listening!

A special acknowledgement to my friend and mentor, Mrs. Glenda Johnson. She taught me many aspects of leadership and always had faith in my abilities. The years I worked as her assistant principal will always be special to me.

Finally, a very special thanks to my best friend and reader, Marsena. Thanks for reading and editing when I could no longer process a logical thought!

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VITA

Linda G. McQuaig is a candidate for the doctoral degree in Educational Administration at Georgia Southern University. She is principal of Bacon County Primary School in Alma, Georgia. She was the former assistant principal and third grade teacher at the same school. Linda is originally from this area and in fact is the principal of the same school she attended as a child. She completed her undergraduate degree and masters in early childhood education at Georgia Southern University. She obtained a specialist degree from Valdosta State University in early childhood and later added leadership certification.

Linda has lived in Alma for most of her life. She and her husband are high school sweethearts and have been married for fifteen years. Her husband is the local optometrist. She has no children but enjoys her two house cats, Morris and Shadow.

ABSTRACT

School systems across the United States have implemented various forms of site-based management (SBM) to restructure their schools and ultimately improve education. Educators have been disappointed with the results of SBM and some have related its failure to the way SBM was implemented in many school systems. Too often, SBM was implemented as a top-down decision and viewed as a goal to obtain rather than a continuous learning process.

This study was an ethnohistorical, single-case study of a small, rural elementary school in Southeast Georgia that implemented a form of site-based management, shared governance. Data collection consisted of a combination of qualitative techniques which included interview, observation, and a review of relevant documents. A combination of the constant comparison method of analysis and the use of the QSR Nud.ist computer program was used to process and analyze the data.

This study emphasized the importance of the transformational leader and his/her ability to create conditions in schools which support change. Including teachers in the decision-making process created ownership, increased teacher satisfaction and was vital to sustaining the improvement process. Once teachers and principals collaborated together in decision making, traditional roles

changed. Teachers assumed leadership roles and the principal became a facilitator instead of a dictator. The process of change was complex and took a considerable length of time before improvement occurred. Essential elements to Optima sustaining the process was support from the League of Professional Schools, the climate the principal had created at Optima, and the parental and community involvement in the school.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

During the past decade, public education in the United States has received widespread criticism from various groups. American employers have complained that graduates found it difficult to do the increasingly complex work required of them and that they did not learn easily on the job (Carnegie Report, 1986). American business and political leaders have observed the shift in the international economy and have tried to educate the public about the upcoming dangers. The changing economy has shifted emphasis away from training young people for simple, mundane jobs to training them to think innovatively and to produce quality products (Reich, 1990). America has lost its dominance in the world economy and if America plans to regain a premier place in the world market, there must be radical changes in the educational system (Walker & Roder, 1993).

In an effort to confront the problems of inadequate student performance, there have been numerous national reports, federal and state legislative mandates. Two United States' presidents have tried to stem the "rising tide of mediocrity" in United States' education (Smith & O'Day,

1990, p. 233). State and federal governments have allocated extra monies to education in an effort to improve education across the country. According to the Carnegie Report (1986), simply repairing the system would not be enough. The Carnegie Task Force reported that "the educational systems must be rebuilt to meet the drastic change in our economy if we are to prepare our children for productive lives in the 21st. century" (p. 14).

Statement of the Problem

Site-based management (SBM), a form of school decentralization, has been implemented in many systems across the United States in an effort to improve education. Although SBM has been widely implemented, there was limited research available on successful efforts. Many of the studies available suggested that SBM had not improved the education of students (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990). This study attempted to present a practice-based example of site-based management.

Site-based management appeared in many guises and means different things to different people (David, 1996). Also, many different terms were used to represent SBM in the literature. In this study, SBM was referred to as participative decision making, shared decision making, shared governance, empowerment, etc. The many different facets of restructuring schools are similar to the many

different terms used to signify SBM and there was no real consensus on what was meant by either one.

Proponents of SBM suggested that its limited success may be due to the manner in which SBM was initiated in the school systems. In many school systems, SBM was implemented as a top-down decision making model with the wrong outcome in mind. Midgley and Wood (1993) advocated that site-based management should not be seen as a goal or as a new wave of school reform. They stressed that site-based management needs to be seen as an important process for achieving substantive school reform on an on-going basis and should be viewed as a tool to use in long term school improvement.

Although site-based management was mentioned in the literature as a major reform initiative, little was explained about how to design and implement a suitable SBM plan. Consultants offered ideas and suggestions but there was little research on practice-based methods (Prestine & Bowen, 1993). Kirby and Colbert (1994) suggested that there was little empirical research on how to best shift decision-making to the teachers and site administrators. Frase and Sorenson (1992) stated that what research we do have on participative management was of little assistance to practicing administrators. School systems needed information on how to prepare for and implement site-based management from administrators who had practical experience. The research was intended to examine and describe the

process Optima Elementary used to implement site-based management. The goal was to more thoroughly understand the SBM process and identify characteristics which may prove beneficial. Data derived from studies which view the entire process instead of separating it into variables should provide useful information and insights for practicing administrators and serve as a guide for future SBM implementation.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the process associated with the implementation of site-based management at Optima Elementary (pseudonym to protect respondents) using qualitative techniques in a case study format. Using the case study format gave the researcher the opportunity to reconstruct events which occurred as this school planned and implemented site-based management. The researcher could better depict the "multiple realities encountered" at the school, the interactions among participants, and what influenced the school to initiate reform by using the case study method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41).

Identifying site-based management as a process for achieving school reform rather than as a goal to be obtained was important for administrators to understand. This was particularly important if they were interested in a site-based management approach. This study attempted to provide

administrators with a practice-based example of a school which implemented site-based management at its own initiative. While the findings of qualitative, case study research are not generalizable beyond the case, understanding the process associated with site-based management in one setting may contribute to the greater understanding of its implementation at other settings by school administrators.

Importance of the Study

The continuing demand for quality education kept pressure on schools to improve student achievement and to use the resources allocated to school systems more effectively. Educators began to evaluate the way students learn and the way schools function (Heller, 1993). According to Lunenburg (1992), the educational system needed to be restructured due to the "inherent flaws which prevent educators from responding effectively to a changing world" (p.11). America's culturally diverse population and the family and social structure changed dramatically so that schools no longer met society's needs (Lunenburg, 1992). The literature on school reform suggested the need to restructure public schools, and described models to use in this proposed reorganization. Most of the research, however, covered "conceptual arguments, how-to-guides, and testimonials from practitioners" (David, 1989, p. 45),

rather than providing field-based, research on how to best shift decision-making to teachers.

Site-based management as a model, received much attention as a way to restructure schools (David, 1989). There had also been much debate over whether a site-based management plan would actually improve student achievement. While advocates of site-based management were numerous, assessments of schools' efforts in implementing restructuring plans were limited (Prestine & Bowen, 1993). There was a scarcity of field-based research (David, 1989) that described or documented restructuring as experienced at the school level. Past studies have tended to be descriptive and general in focus (Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). Kirby and Colbert (1994) reported that there was little research suggesting how best to shift decision-making to teachers. Prestine and Bowen (1993) stated that as a consequence the:

thick descriptions necessary for understanding the complex and interactive nature of the restructuring processes and the hard data needed for informed decision making in schools contemplating restructuring initiative are noticeably lacking (p. 298).

There was a pressing need for understanding more clearly what was happening in schools which were attempting to make changes. Research that focused on problems encountered in

the process of implementing site-based management would be beneficial to understanding school reform.

School leaders must recognize that change is difficult. Much uncertainty should be expected during planning and implementation of change. Fullan and Miles (1992) advocated viewing major change as a "guided journey" (p. 749). This case study provided data on the process one school utilized to implement site-based management. Therefore, administrators could gain insight into the types of problems to expect as they embarked on their journeys. This study will add to the knowledge base of practice-based, site-based management models and offer relevant information to other school administrators who plan to restructure using a site-based management approach.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study was to take an intensive look at the process one rural elementary school went through as it implemented a site-based management model. The researcher sought to examine the process of implementing site-based management in a unique setting, Optima Elementary. Unique features of Optima Elementary which contributed to the changes were analyzed, and the researcher examined how those changes were being sustained. The struggles and conflicts shared by the staff at the school as they planned and implemented site-based management reflected

what can be expected when a school attempts to restructure its governance model (Eastwood & Louis, 1992).

The research objectives which provided direction for the collection and analysis of data were as follows: (1) to prepare through the collection and analysis of pertinent documents and through structured and unstructured interviews, a description of the factors contributing to the implementation of site-based management at Optima Elementary during the years 1989-1996; (2) to identify, review, and summarize concepts in the literature that helped explain the forces which impacted upon the implementation of site-based management at Optima Elementary from 1989-1996; (3) to generate naturalistic generalizations from the data; and (4) to expand the generalizations into an "analytic description" of the change process at Optima Elementary (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 3).

Field-based inquiry, using case study techniques, was well-suited to the proposed investigation. To gain insight into the restructuring process, it was crucial to experience the organizational setting first-hand, and to hear the meaning attached to events and circumstances by the participants at the site (Vargus, 1992).

Procedures

In order to depict the actual events as they occurred during the implementation of site-based management at a

single school, the researcher chose the design of an ethnohistorical, single-case study (Merriam, 1988; Bjork, 1992). The researcher chose to study Optima Elementary in its natural state through the use of a combination of qualitative techniques and the case study format (Merriam, 1988). Through an intensive study of Optima Elementary and the changes implemented, the researcher sought to examine the process used at a school which had implemented site-based management.

Data Collection

The staff at Optima Elementary constituted a "naturally bounded" group (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 62). The study focused on Optima Elementary from the inception of the idea about changing the governance system in 1989, through the actual implementation process and concluded in 1996. This bounded the study to a seven year period.

The main means of data collection consisted of a combination of participant observation and interviews. The researcher attended as many school functions as possible and observed the workings of the Excellent School Program Team (governing body of Optima Elementary). Meetings and school functions were recorded when possible and later transcribed into descriptive format.

The researcher used a combination of semistructured, unstructured, and group interviews. Unstructured group

interviews were used at the beginning of data collection. Information obtained from the group interviews was used to generate the individual interview questions. Semistructured interviews were conducted with key staff members who were involved during the planning or implementation of site-based management or who have served key roles since its implementation in 1989. Unstructured interviews were utilized to interview parents and members of the local community who have been involved with Optima Elementary. All interviews were audio-recorded (with participant's consent) and later transcribed into written format.

In addition to participant observation and interviews, the researcher gathered a variety of other important historical documents such as desk logs, letters, minutes of team meetings, and written reports. Historical documents added credence to the recollection of participants during the interview process (Patton, 1980).

Descriptive Narrative

The results of the study were presented in a narrative format which is characteristic of the case study design. The events which occurred at Optima Elementary were reconstructed as accurately as possible by the researcher in an effort to relate the story from the perspective of the persons who actually experienced the events. The story provided the reader with an understanding of the

implementation process through providing a "thick description" of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125).

Data Analysis

In this qualitative case study, data collection and analysis were ongoing processes. As the data were collected, they were assigned a code initially and arranged chronologically for easy access. After data collection was completed, the researcher reclassified the data into categories which represented the recurring themes and patterns in the study. The researcher used the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the data. Constant comparison compared one piece of information with another and attempted to tie the data to relevant literature. As the data were fit into the appropriate category, relationships became better defined.

Limitations

This study was limited to a single case study of a small, rural elementary school in Southeastern Georgia. The study focused on the process Optima Elementary went through as it planned and implemented site-based management. The generalizability was limited to Optima Elementary. However, the data obtained from this study could provide insight to others concerned with implementing site-based management and initiating restructuring efforts.

A major limitation in such a case study was the role of the observer. The researcher acknowledged that her mere presence could change what was being studied. The researcher needed to be aware of situations in which she might alter the situation being observed and might need to make adaptations. In this study, the researcher functioned as a participant observer (Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher attended school meetings such as staff meetings, council meetings and PTO meetings in an attempt to gain the acceptance and trust of the faculty and community. This association aided the researcher in obtaining more reliable information during the interview process. It was understood by the faculty that the researcher was primarily an observer and had limited interactions with the participants. The researcher also sought out alternative perspectives and opinions on the site-base management process in order to prevent a one-sided interpretation of the study. The researcher attempted to limit personal biases from influencing the collection and analysis of data.

Another limitation related to the amount of time lapsed since the site-based management process began at Optima Elementary. Several of the teachers on the original Excellent School Program Team had moved to other positions or had retired. The researcher located former team members in the community for interviews to prevent the changes in faculty make-up from becoming a major limitation. Also,

time lapse could have influenced recollection of events by the participants.

Definition of Terms

1. Site-based management is a form of decentralization which shifts the decision-making power from the central office to site-administrators, teachers, parents, students, and others who have a stake in the outcome. Its various forms may be referred to as shared decision-making, shared governance, empowerment, etc. All forms signify significant teacher participation in decisions made at the school site.

2. The Excellent School Program Team is the council at Optima Elementary which is the decision-making body for the school. Its members consist of the principal, a teacher representative from each grade, a special education teacher, and a paraprofessional.

3. Constant comparison analysis is a strategy which "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed and coded" (in LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 256). As social events are recorded and coded, they are simultaneously compared across categories. This inductive strategy was devised to assist in generating social theory to explain school reform.

4. Task force is a term used by the League of Professional Schools to signify a group of individuals at

the school site working as a group to investigate various improvement issues prior to implementation.

5. Participant observation is a data collection technique used by qualitative researchers. It involves a participant observer blending into the research site and taking part in the daily activities as much as possible (LeCompte & Preissle, 1991). The level of participation varies on a continuum from being a complete observer to a full participant (Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The participant observer gets to know the individuals at the site and develops a trusting relationship so that the observer can record what he/she has heard and observed.

6. Observer as participant falls on the participant observation continuum range at mostly observation yet at different times during the study has some interaction with the participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

7. League of Professional Schools is an organization developed by Carl Glickman to help schools improve instruction through the professionalization of teachers. The organization works with schools interested in using shared governance as a tool to empower teachers at the school site and to involve them in shared-decision making. Through shared-decision making, teachers lead the school towards instructional improvement and increased student achievement.

8. Naturalistic generalization is a type of generalization which is based on personal experience, and is more intuitive (Stake, 1978). It is the most effective means of helping readers understand the natural and personal experiences of the participants involved in the study.

9. Key informants are participants who have extensive knowledge regarding the phenomenon under study. The key informant is willing to talk to the researcher and willing to be interviewed extensively and possibly more than once (Jorgensen, 1989).

Summary

In an effort to improve education in the United States, many schools implemented site-based management. Rather than viewing SBM as a goal, it should be viewed as a process. This study described the planning and implementation process used to implement SBM at Optima Elementary. The researcher used qualitative research techniques in a case study format to depict the changes in a unique setting, Optima Elementary.

The researcher used a combination of interviews and a review of pertinent documents to describe the factors which led to the implementation of SBM. Factors from the literature which helped to explain the impact of internal and external forces on the change were identified.

Additionally, an analytic description of the change process at Optima Elementary was developed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In the United States, much attention has been focused on reforming education to meet the needs of today's society. Many have emphasized that it was necessary to totally restructure the school's governance system to meet the needs of tomorrow's student (Carnegie Report, 1986). In Georgia, reforming school governance structures and educational practices gained momentum, but little research has been done on schools which have made the attempt. This qualitative study focused on a Georgia school which attempted to reform. The study described the process of implementing site-based management at Optima Elementary in Southeast Georgia. To implement a major change, such as site-based management, many aspects of schooling will be affected. Therefore, the review of literature provided the broad view of educational reform. It was appropriate to review the external forces behind the push for the current reforms, the background of the reform movement, and to provide a foundation of the significant areas within the school which were affected by major changes.

National Educational Reform

Schools had typically been used as a public forum to address the economic problems found in American society (Bjork, 1992; Moorman & Egermeier, 1992). In times of crisis, Americans turned to education in hope that the schools could help meet the labor needs and economic challenges of society (Moorman & Egermeier, 1992). Shifts in the world economy, changes in the value structure of the United States, changes in the demographics, and the quickening pace of technology had a dramatic impact on social institutions--such as schools--and forced the reexamination of management issues in school systems across the United States (Conley, 1994).

- The American economy was transforming in ways which were impacting the schools (Conley, 1994). According to Conley (1994), the elements with the greatest potential for impacting the schools included the following:
 - The transition from a low-skilled work force to a highly skilled work force which must be prepared to make key decisions (Reich, 1990).
 - A global economy with increased competition among Asia, Europe, and North America (Mandel & Bernstein, 1990).
 - Fewer Federal dollars will be available to schools and state and local governments will be unable to raise taxes to

make up the difference due to decreased rates in income growth (Hollister, 1990).

- A work force increasingly made up of larger numbers of women and minorities which have traditionally been poorly served by our education system (Murphy & Louis, 1994).
- The reorganization of large companies which has resulted in the elimination of middle-management positions which leads to workers having to accept more responsibility in decision-making (Conley, 1994, p. 28).

Historically, schools have done a poor job of educating the at-risk student (typically a minority or poverty student) and women (Conley, 1994; Beck & Murphy, 1993). This history of failure to educate minorities successfully would have a severe, negative impact if the demographic trends of society continued to change in the current pattern (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Hodgkinson, 1991a). The minority student population continued to grow faster than other segments of the population and was adding to the diversity level of students in schools (Bjork, 1995; Hodgkinson, 1991a). Student population diversity coupled with the economic need to educate all students to high levels was placing a strain on the educational system (Beck & Murphy, 1993). By the year 2020, projections indicated that the student populations of schools would contain nearly half minority students (Hodgkinson, 1991a).

Two contributing factors to a perception of decline in the public schools were societal in nature--value shifts and the dramatic changes in the American family (Hodgkinson, 1991a; Beck & Murphy, 1993).

- The American family has disintegrated from a cohesive unit of two parents to a single parent home in which little time was spent with the children (Hodgkinson, 1991a).
- The increase in the number of children living in poverty and the perceived failure of social service programs to meet the needs of these children (Hodgkinson, 1991).
- The increased value of the individual and his/her rights in a democratic society has focused attention on schools and their lack of ability to serve each student's unique needs under the current structure (Conley, 1994).
- A dramatic shift in the latitude of disciplining students, the freedom of speech, and modification of dress codes are correlated with the increased rights of students (Conley, 1994).

As the United States moved from a post-industrial society to an information society, there became less of a need for bureaucratic management structures (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Bureaucratic methods of management were incompatible with cooperative work efforts needed in the information age; therefore, schools were being encouraged by business to

abandon the bureaucratic hierarchy used for operating most schools (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

Communication technology, a central part of the information age, was advancing at a rapid rate and changed the way information was organized and disseminated throughout the world (Conley, 1994). This provided several issues for discussion about the changing role of the school and the future dissemination of knowledge.

- As knowledge becomes more accessible, should the teacher's role change from encouraging memorization to store information to teaching students how to assess information (Sheingold, 1991)?
- Should textbooks continue to be the main resource schools for instruction (Conley, 1994)?
- How might the structure of schools and the funding base be changed to keep up with advancing technologies (Levinson, 1990)?
- How might the organization of both the school day and the curriculum be modified to keep up with the rapid changes in the knowledge base (Conley, 1994)?

Educational Reform (1983-1996) - The First Wave

The reform movements which began in the early eighties became known by some observers as "waves" (Firestone, 1990; Murphy, 1990a; Owens, 1991). As new reform initiatives came

upon the horizon, they would rise in popularity, peak, and then diminish as another idea would form. The first wave of reform in America's schools was prompted by the release of A Nation at Risk in 1983. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) issued the report with observations of declining test scores, United States' students performing poorly academically when compared with European and Japanese students, and unacceptable levels of illiteracy among American children and adults (Lunenburg, 1992). To correct these deficiencies, the recommendations included increasing graduation requirements, lengthening the school day and year, and generally making students and teachers more accountable. This view of schooling depicted by A Nation at Risk dominated policy makers through 1985 and led to an abundance of bureaucratic mandates from state governments to improve education, i.e., state mandated curriculum, state mandated achievement test, state mandated certification, etc. (Lunenburg, 1992).

Evaluation of these reforms indicated that only minor changes occurred in the schools and that most classroom practices and instructional content continued as they had before (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986). The results were viewed with great disappointment. Analysts attributed "the meagerness of the results to the very nature of early reform efforts, which they characterize as 'top-down' and 'more of the same'" (Smith & O'Day, 1990,

p. 233). These first wave reforms were basically "quick-fix" attempts (longer school day, increased requirements for graduation, competency tests at various levels, etc.) which were initiated at the state level and sent down to local boards of education to implement. It should not have been a surprise that these reform efforts did not produce "meaningful gains in learning" (Smith & O'Day, 1990, p. 233). Since little was done to change instruction, teachers were not involved in the reform process, and much emphasis was placed on teacher deficiencies instead of student learning (Cohen, 1989; Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986). According to Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd (1988), the movement produced little change and only served to reinforce the bureaucratic structure of schools.

Educational Reform (1983-1996) - The Second Wave

In response to the inadequacies of these reform efforts and a continued emphasis on school improvement, the second wave of reforms began to appear in the late 1980s. These reforms included efforts to correct the imbalance between top-down administration and the collaborative administration of schools by calling for a fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the process of schooling (Smith & O'Day, 1990). The purpose was to shift from a bureaucratic structure to a professionally oriented one in which teachers were encouraged to participate (Lieberman & Miller, 1990).

According to the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986) and Elmore (1990), the key concepts of the second wave were decentralization, national certification of teachers, professionalization of teachers, and bottom-up change which focused on actively involving those closest to instruction.

The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986) stressed the need for principals to become change agents, to affect the climate of a school, and to empower others at the school site. In the restructuring plan, the school building became the basic unit of change, and teachers and principals were not only the change agents, but also the initiators, designers, and directors of the change efforts (Smith & O'Day, 1990). The underlying theme of the second wave was that if school personnel were held accountable for producing change, they would use their professional knowledge to create the most effective ways to improve instruction at their schools (Smith & O'Day, 1990).

The second wave is still relatively young, and school systems have been slow to implement the new approaches to improvement. Even though restructuring implementation has moved slowly, it has generated much thought among educators. David (1989) stated that the movement has stimulated administrators to think about change in school structures and to look at how different strategies in leading and managing staff might create improvement in the schools.

Through previous reform efforts, it was now recognized that effective practice could not be mandated by policy, and if policy could not control factors such as commitment or engagement, then it was necessary to think differently about reform (Lieberman & Miller, 1990). It was necessary to create the conditions that enabled teachers to accomplish the desired outcome, true educational improvement for the majority of students. The compelling arguments and focus of the second wave of reform contributed to advancing the concept of decentralization, site-based management and shared decision making as vehicles for rethinking the country's educational system.

Decentralization

Decentralization was a plan to shift control from individuals in top management positions to those in lower level jobs in the organization (Wohlstetter, & Mohrman, 1993). Decentralized management has a long history in the private and public sectors (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). In the 1930s, Mary Parker Follett argued management was a social process which was entrenched in a particular institutional situation (Owens, 1991). She did not view authority as flowing from the top to the bottom (Metcalf & Urwick, 1941). Follett emphasized the practice of sharing authority and making workers feel that they worked with the leader rather than under him/her (Metcalf & Urwick, 1941).

Fifty years later American businesses began adopting this management style after W. Edwards Deming demonstrated its effectiveness in Japan (Glasser, 1992) in order to restore confidence in the American product (Griffin & Phipps, 1992). It emphasized that there were leaders working throughout the organization in lower level jobs who needed to be involved in the decision-making process. Including these individuals in decision-making produced better products and increased employee satisfaction (Glasser, 1992).

Decentralization in schools evolved from the business sector and the types of restructuring efforts in which they were involved (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994). In schools, decentralization referred to shifting decision-making from the central office to the individual school where decisions were made by people who knew and cared most about the quality of education students received (Martin, 1991-92).

Lawler (1986) referred to high-involvement management (which was popular among businesses) as a form of decentralized management appropriate for service organizations that:

engage in knowledge production, exist in a changing (usually rapidly changing) environment, are staffed by individuals whose job tasks are complex and require constant decision making, and are characterized by interdependence among tasks within the organization.

All of these characteristics apply to schools.

(Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992, p. 539)

After over 20 years of research on decentralization, Lawler (1986) pointed out that for decentralization to be successful, control over four resources must be shifted to employees in the organization: (1) power to make decisions which influenced policy and practices; (2) knowledge which helped employees understand how to contribute to the organization's effectiveness; (3) information regarding all necessary aspects of the organization which were related to decisions being made; and (4) rewards based on performance and participation. Research in the private sector which reflected large-scale change, such as above, could not be simply installed. Rather, it must take place over time and be seen as a gradual learning process (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993).

Site-Based Management

In response to the national call for restructuring schools, many school systems adopted a model of improvement called site-based management (SBM). SBM was a type of decentralization that emerged as a major initiative of the current reform era in an effort to create conditions in schools that would facilitate improvement, innovations, and continuous professional growth (David, 1989).

Site-based management was a model to decentralize decision making from the school boards and central offices to each individual school site (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). This delegation of authority and shift in decision making responsibility was the backbone of site-based management (David, 1989). The rationale of site-based management rested on two propositions: (1) the school was the primary decision-making unit and its decisions should be made at the lowest possible level; and (2) change required ownership and came from the opportunity to participate in formulating new ideas and adapting them to individual situations (David, 1989). When teachers were allowed to participate on the basis of these propositions, they were more likely to be responsive to change (Blase & Blase, 1994; David, 1989).

These propositions were then translated into two site-based management practices: (1) school autonomy was increased through a combination of budgetary control and relief from constraining rules and regulations; and (2) decision making authority was shared with teachers and sometimes parents, students and other community members (David, 1989). Site-based management was a bottom-up approach which focused on the change process and the active involvement of those closest to instruction (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986). The school building became the basic unit of change, and site educators

were not only the change agents, but also the initiators, designers, and directors of the change efforts (Smith & O'Day, 1990).

Business leaders found that when they decentralized the workplace, production increased. Like businesses, schools must make changes as needed to meet future demands. These changes occurred more effectively when they took place under one roof as a part of a site-based management model (Bailey, 1991). Therefore, site-based management might be expected to operate differently from one school to the next and from one year to the next (David, 1989).

A vital part of a site-based management plan was teacher participation in decision making at all levels of education. The research continued to suggest that teacher participation in the decision making process was an essential ingredient to educational reform (Sarason, 1990; Hallinger, Murphy, & Hausman, 1992). Participation referred to providing formal opportunities for teachers to be actively involved in decisions made about improving the school. One of the strongest arguments for including teachers in decision-making, according to Conley, Schmidle & Shedd (1988), was that participation improved the quality of decisions made. They believed that not only did the quality of decisions improve, but participation tended to build consensus on goals and agreement on priorities. Additionally, these authors cited recent research on school

effectiveness that supported increased teacher participation because it helped clarify the school's mission and goals (Sergiovanni, 1995). They also listed teacher participation in decision-making as providing additional benefit, in that it was a factor that broke down the barriers that created the isolation of teaching. The solitary nature of teaching, the physical layout of facilities, and the restrictive time schedules of schools, limited the opportunities for teachers to learn from each other or to cultivate professional knowledge (Conley, Schmidle & Shedd, 1988).

For teachers to participate effectively in shared decision-making, the most critical component which must be in place was effective staff development (Mentell, 1993). This was also one of the greatest challenges. According to Wood and Thompson (1993), substantial change in school practice required four or five years and sometimes longer. "This requires long-range planning of staff development for school improvement" (Wood & Thompson, 1993, p. 53). In a study of principals' perceptions in restructured schools, Hallinger et al. (1992) reported that administrators stressed "the importance of training everyone involved in the restructuring process so that they could assume new roles and responsibilities" (p. 339). The principals also believed that it was essential for everyone to participate in staff development so they could understand restructuring, what it involved, and learn how to participate effectively

in shared decision making and collaborative working relationships (Hallinger et al., 1992).

Staff development should be viewed as an ongoing process and have continuity (Asayesh, 1993). Ann Liberman (cited in Asayesh, 1993) states:

We have seriously underestimated that learning is continuous. It's not just learn it and go do it. It's a process. And that process probably needs more work and support after a teacher is introduced to new ideas than before. (p. 24)

Through staff development, educators became knowledgeable about the change process and that knowledge was the best chance we had in achieving substantial education reform (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 752).

Leadership

During the past two decades, there were serious attempts to reform public education (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994; Murphy & Louis, 1994). Throughout the reform efforts of the last two decades, much attention was focused on what type of a leader was needed to move schools toward the 21st century (Blase & Blase, 1994; Conley, 1991). To understand the current definition of the principalship, it was necessary to reflect on the history of the principalship and review the beliefs which influenced the role. Beck & Murphy

(1993) studied the history of the principalship and analyzed their findings in themes for each decade.

- In the 1920s, the principal was considered the social leader of the community and was concerned with promoting traditional spiritual and civic values in schools. The role was also guided by principles of scientific management.
- In the 1930s, the principal was guided less by the "spiritual side of schooling" and became more involved with the business aspect of being a manager as the relationship between school and work became stronger.
- In the 1940s, the role of principal had a very democratic flavor and the school reflected democracy in dealing with the people of the community. Again, the school was oriented to reflecting beliefs but this time human worth and equality were stressed rather than religious values.
- The 1950s were viewed as a transitional phase for the principal. The principal was expected to be knowledgeable about current theory and practice plus run an effective and efficient school plant.
- During the 1960s "complex social problems expanded" and the principals maintained their distance from the "social unrest" by denying the problem. The principal remained aloof during this period and relied on bureaucratic and scientific principles to solve educational problems.

Principals did not conduct themselves according to religious or patriotic beliefs.

- In the 1970s, outside forces (special interest groups) began to get more involved in schools and their practices. The role of the principal was charged with creating a supportive climate and establishing a connection between the community and school. The 1970s supported the value of the whole person and his/her well-being.
- In the 1980s, "the boundaries separating schools and the world outside...became indistinct and permeable" (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p. 147). The openness of the schools made it necessary for principals to address social as well as academic concerns. The principal was expected to be an instructional leader, a change agent and to provide the necessary resources to solve problems.

The educational reform movements of the 1990s changed the desired focus of the leader and the leadership of the school again. The openness of the school expanded with even greater input from outside sources in the community. "There is a growing realization that a school cannot educate children in isolation from the community in which it exists" (Conley, 1994, p. 89). The roles of parents and teachers were intertwined and supported, but did not replace one another (Conley, 1994). Since educators had installed many of the barriers to parent and community involvement, they

needed to begin the process of reaching out to parents and involving them in their child's education. Martin (1991-92) stated that parental involvement in schools was directly related to student achievement.

According to Martin (1991-92), there were various ways parents and members of the community were involved in schools. Many served on advisory committees or councils and shared decisions about school activities with principals and teachers. According to where they were located, councils had varying degrees of influence on school decisions (David, 1996). In Chicago, the majority of the council's membership consisted of nonprofessionals who had the power to hire (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994). All communities had parents and citizens who were valuable participants to the decision-making process but, rarely had equal participation in the decisions made at the school (Conley, 1994). Allowing parents and citizens to participate on councils at the school increased the overall satisfaction of the school in the community (Martin, 1991-92). In the 1990s, administrators were much more concerned about involving parents and the community in the schools (Conley, 1994).

The 1990s reform, which dealt primarily with decentralization, called for a different kind of leader--a leader who worked collaboratively with teachers, parents, and the community (Leithwood, 1992; Hallinger, 1992). Under decentralization, teachers assumed authority over curriculum

and instructional decisions which left little need for the principal to be an instructional leader any longer (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

During the last 75 years, the principalship saw many changes. It shifted and was redefined according to the predominate themes of the current period and its prior history (Beck & Murphy, 1993). According to Beck & Murphy (1993), the predominate themes tended to recycle and recur in varied forms.

Since restructuring was expected to dominate school reform for some time, Leithwood (1994) stated the need for transformational leaders. A transformational leader engaged with others in the organization in such a way that both the leader and follower were raised to a higher level of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders inspired others to work toward a common purpose and were interested in satisfying the wants and needs of the members in the organization (Foster, 1989). According to Leithwood (1994) and Sergiovanni (1990), school leadership faced an uncertain future and they saw an even greater need for transformational leaders who adapted to change and motivated their staffs to higher levels of meaning and purpose.

Research on the type of leader needed for restructuring schools reflected certain practices which were usually present in a transformational leader. In Leithwood (1994),

dimensions that defined transformational leaders in schools were identified: (1)"identifies and articulates a vision;" (2)"fosters the acceptance of group goals;" (3)"conveys high-performance expectations;" (4)"provides appropriate models;" (5)"provides intellectual stimulation;" (6)"provides individualized support" (p. 507). School leaders of the next decade needed the skills mentioned above. They should work collaboratively with their staffs and lead from behind instead of leading from the front (Hallinger, 1992). Fullan and Miles (1992) stated the need for leaders who acknowledged they did not know all the answers, who developed solutions as they went, and who stayed with reform until something meaningful was accomplished.

Transformational leaders created a climate that was conducive to change. According to Reavis (1990), "climate differs from culture in that it addresses the way the people in the organization feel about the organization" (p.43). Climate concerned areas such as trust, opportunity for participation, morale, respect and caring for the members of the organization (Reavis, 1990). The creation of a climate that encouraged and supported teachers to take risks, collaborate with each other, and develop collegial relationships created a foundation for change (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Heller, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Culture was referred to as "the way we do things around here" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 268). The culture of an organization expressed its values, its norms, and how its members solved problems (Reavis, 1990). In a school, the curriculum, classroom practices, culture, and climate interacted together to represent the heart of the school (Reavis, 1990). The climate and culture of a school could be altered to create an environment for change.

Hallinger (1992) stated that the change in decision-making authority was a major adaptation for school leaders. If school leaders wanted their efforts at restructuring to be successful, they must tap the leadership skills of teachers and work with them collaboratively in decision-making (Calabrese, Zepeda, & Shoho, 1996). Instead of the principal making decisions by himself/herself, he/she adjusted to other stakeholders inside and outside the school helping in the decision-making process (Hallinger, 1992).

The delegation of decision making to teachers was a vital part of the transformational leader's role and was a necessary part of any school improvement plan. Barth (1988) emphasized that including teachers in decision making was a slow process, but stressed that the commitment to the decisions far outweighed the time involved of both administrators and teachers. Barth (1988) also stated that traditionally, teachers had been compartmentalized and little was done to encourage teachers to come together and

discuss instructional improvement. Giving leadership roles to teachers provided a constructive format in which the school's adults interacted and overcame their daily isolation. Maeroff (1988) believed that participation in decision-making broke down the isolation that kept teachers separated and prevented networks from developing, and that incorporating teachers into decision-making built better bonds between teachers and their principals.

Developing the capacity of teachers to engage in productive decision-making involved an in-depth process that must be worked on for several years (Bjork, 1992). In addition, administrators looked at whether teachers thought it was worthwhile to participate. Some decisions were best handled by individual leaders, whereas other kinds of decisions may best be made by groups (Bjork, 1992).

Three useful tests were developed to help principals and teachers make decisions about the appropriate time for teachers to participate in decision making. (1) *The test of relevance.* Teachers who had a personal stake in the decision were more likely to participate in the decision-making process. Problems that dealt with instruction, discipline, and curriculum were areas teachers were concerned about. (2) *The test of expertise.* The teacher needed confidence that he or she had the necessary knowledge and training to make a significant contribution. (3) *The*

test of jurisdiction. The decision was in an area in which the teacher had some control. Teachers needed to see their decisions implemented or they got frustrated (Owens, 1991).

Pressing teachers to participate in decision-making outside their areas of interest was met with resistance and had limited success (Owens, 1991). The "zone of indifference" reflected the areas teachers were not interested in getting involved (Owens, 1991, p. 280). Principals needed to make administrative decisions concerning those areas themselves. When there was a high degree of interest in the content of the decision, there was a corresponding high degree of interest in participating in making the decisions that affected those areas (Bjork, 1992). Principals discovered the balance between increasing teacher commitment through shared decision-making and not overburdening teachers with the additional demands of involvement (Bjork, 1992).

Redefining the Roles of Teachers and Principals

The decentralization of the power structure of an organization creates a major change in both the teacher and principal roles (Mentell, 1993). Power was defined by Hoy and Miskel (1991) as one person having the ability to influence the behavior or actions of others. Hall (1991) stated that power was an act that was meaningless unless it

was exercised. For power to be exercised, there must be a recipient of power. A person "cannot have power in isolation; it has to be in relationship to some other person" (Hall, 1991, p. 109). As schools altered their governance structures, power relationships changed within the school.

Dunlap and Goldman (1991) provided an additional way to view power within the school. Instead of describing power as having influence over someone, they proposed that power be exercised through someone (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991).

Facilitative power reflects a process that, by creating or sustaining favorable conditions, allows subordinates to enhance their individual and collective performance. If dominance is power over someone, facilitative power is power manifested through someone. (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991, p. 13)

Principals in restructured schools became accustomed to leading from the center (Fullan, 1991) and through others, not by dictating but by facilitating (Conley, 1994, p.79). Restructuring schools to encourage significant changes "ultimately means changes in the roles of those at the school site" (Conley, 1994, p. 79). Principals and teachers were accustomed to working in isolation from each other and adapted to a collaborative working relationship (Heller, 1993). Conley (1994) suggested several behaviors which

corresponded to role changes that principals in schools going through restructuring needed if they were going to be successful.

A clear sense of purpose linked to the vision. The principal's decisions and actions were guided by the vision which was created jointly by the staff. The vision was articulated often to the staff, programmatic decisions were linked to the vision, and new ideas were evaluated in conjunction with the vision statement.

The use of data to inform decisions and create vision. Principals encouraged the collection of data which led to the development of new ideas. The data was related to a specific school or a new educational trend.

Allocation of resources consistent with the vision. It was vital that "principals allocate resources such as money, space, scheduling, and personnel in ways that help achieve the vision" (Conley, 1994, p. 81).

Creation of new decision-making structures. In the new role as facilitator, the principal created a new structure for decision-making. Principals were willing to share the power with the staff by surrendering control and letting the people of the organization make important decisions.

Provision of information to teachers. If teachers were going to make quality decisions, principals needed to share necessary information about budget, personnel, schedules,

and curriculum with them. The success of the new decision-making structure would be limited if teachers were not given information related to the whole school.

Less direct leadership, more support of teachers. As principals developed better facilitator skills, they also learned how to support teacher decisions, learned how to participate without controlling, and developed patience and trust in the teachers (Calabrese, Zepeda, & Shoho, 1996).

Increase skills in handling conflict. As the governance structure was changed and the staff had the opportunity to participate in the decision making process, the amount of conflict in the school increased (Murphy & Louis, 1994). As the dialogue among the staff increased, there was a need for the principal to "mediate, negotiate, and resolve disputes more than ever before" (Murphy & Louis, 1994, p. 220).

A major shift in the behaviors mentioned above was difficult for many administrators especially those at or near the middle of their careers (Conley, 1994). Major staff development was needed for principals to develop the skills for the process they were supposed to be guiding their teachers through (Conley, 1993). Another challenge associated with redefining the roles was that even though the teachers may have made a decision, the principal was

still responsible for the outcome whether it was positive or negative (Conley, 1994).

Teachers also had to adjust to significant changes in their roles in a restructured school (Conley, 1994; Richardson, Lane & Flanigan, 1995). A significant change for teachers was moving from working in isolation to working with the principal, teachers and other staff members collaboratively (Conley, 1994; Heller, 1993). This type of role change made staff development essential in the areas of communication, negotiation, consensus, goal-setting, and conflict resolution for both the teacher and principal (Conley, 1994).

"Communication continues to remain one of the integral components of successful staff decision making" (Heller, 1993, p. 101). Evans (1993) stated "the larger the innovation, the greater the need for communication" (p. 22). Major changes in roles and structure led to confusion and misunderstanding (Evans, 1993). These confusions and misunderstandings could be avoided by involving all staff members in an effective communication network (Mentell, 1993). According to Mentell (1993), information must reach all levels of the organization. Information must move downward, upward, and horizontally for effective communication (Mentell, 1993).

Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) found that successful site-based managed schools disseminated information broadly

and involved all stakeholders in decisions. The information flowed from the central office to the school site, to the parents and the community, and back to the central office. The communication network consisted of a combination of vertical and horizontal work teams which communicated a wide awareness of the school needs (Odden & Wohlstetter, 1995).

The teachers also had to shift their perspective of the school from their single classroom to the school as a whole (David, 1989). As teachers participated more in the decision making process, their perspectives broadened to encompass all types of decisions they made and decisions they were accountable for now (Goldman, Dunlap & Conley, 1991). As Conley (1994) stated, this broad perspective, for most teachers, was uncomfortable and what seemed simple before now became complex.

Conley (1994) contended that as teachers assumed responsibility for decisions made, teachers were less likely to close the classroom door without thought to the outcomes. Teachers felt more ownership in the decision and tried to ensure that the decisions made resulted in improved learning (Conley, 1994).

Educational Change

In the education arena, change was typically thought of as either a first-order change or a second-order change. First-order changes were defined by Cuban (1988) as changes

that "try to make what exists more efficient and effective without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering how adults and children in schools perform their roles" (p. 93). First-order changes tried to enhance existing practices while correcting deficiencies in the core technology of teaching (Cuban, 1988; Leithwood, 1994). Most changes which occurred as a result of school reform were first-order changes such as recruiting better teachers, curriculum reform, changes in scheduling, and changes in evaluation and training (Fullan, 1992).

According to Cuban (1988), second-order change could be referred to as "solutions to design problems" (p.93). Individuals sought to alter the fundamental design of organizations because they were dissatisfied with the present structure. Second-order change introduced new goals, structures, and roles that transformed the way things had been done traditionally in the organization. School restructuring, especially site-based management, was an example of a second-order change (Cuban, 1988; Leithwood, 1994).

Research on reform initiatives reported that most first-order changes were unsuccessful because little attention had been paid to second-order change which largely involved the human element of change. Implementing a site-based management plan required both first-order and second-

order changes. Second-order changes dealt with changing the organizational culture, distributing the power and leadership among the faculty, and altering the structure and operation of the school. Elmore (1990) noted that school restructuring encompasses three broad dimensions:

- . changes in the way teaching and learning occur, or the core technology of schooling.
- . changes in the occupational situation of educators, including conditions of entry and licensure of teachers and administrators, school structure, conditions of work, and decision-making processes within schools.
- . changes in the distribution of power between schools and their clients, or in the governance structure within which schools operate. (p.11)

Changing the governance and organization of schools with a site-based management plan was complex and extremely challenging. Many perceived it as threatening (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). The roles and responsibilities of individuals were rethought and redefined, traditional practices were left behind, and individuals were retrained in a new way of thinking. Bolman and Deal (1991) stated that substantial change in roles stirred fear because people worried about losing their status and influence associated with their job. They were concerned about making the

adjustments and about the confusion which would be created by the changes (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Eastwood and Louis (1992) referred to the confusion and frustration which people experienced during early implementation of the change effort as the "performance dip" (p. 214). The performance dip referred to the "often-noted decrease of individual performance whenever a new skill or program was implemented" (Eastwood and Louis, 1992, p. 214-215). Before the new skill was institutionalized by staff members, individual performance actually declined. With adequate support and coping skills from the principal, this decline reversed and performance climbed to a higher level than previously experienced (Eastwood & Louis, 1992).

Fullan (1993) cautioned policymakers not to mandate changes such as the implementation of site-based management because of the complexity of the change. He stressed that policymakers could not "mandate what matters" (p.22). In a site-based management plan, the leader was more interested in the teachers' skills, commitment, motivation, beliefs and insights. These, according to Fullan (1993), were things that could not be mandated. "You cannot force them to think differently or compel them to develop new skills" (p. 23). Under the conditions which surrounded a complex change such as site-based management, the "alternative that works is creating conditions that enable and press people to consider personal and shared visions, and skill development through

practice over time" (Fullan, 1993, p.23). Creating the conditions under which teachers accepted the risk of making a major change (such as site-based management) was the responsibility of the principal (Heller, 1993).

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to consider the multiple contexts of contemporary educational reform. The review provided an examination of the external forces behind the current reform movement as well as the background of educational reform which included the first and second waves of the reform movement since 1983. Significant elements of educational reform pertinent to the study of Optima Elementary were also reviewed.

Site-based management, a type of decentralization, was reviewed along with the aspects usually associated with its varying forms. An investigation of the principalship was presented with an emphasis on transformational leaders needed for the 1990s to move schools through the process of change. A vital role of the transformational leader was to include teachers in decision making. The participation of teachers in decision-making resulted in role changes for both the teacher and the principal.

The final section of the literature review explored first-order and second-order changes as related to educational reform. SBM was viewed as a second-order change

which was complex and challenging to implement.

Policymakers created conditions which enabled complex changes to occur rather than mandating complex change.

This literature review guided the study of Optima Elementary by providing questions and areas of concern. The literature also helped provide explanations for the changes that occurred during the planning and implementation process of SBM.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

An increasing number of researchers have advocated that research which deals with schools may be best conducted in natural settings (Sherman & Webb, 1988; Edson, 1988), and that qualitative methods were appropriate to study naturally occurring phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Schools, real places with real people, could be studied using qualitative research methodology which allowed the researcher to immerse herself into the multiple realities which surround the participants of the study (Merriam, 1988).

Lincoln and Guba (1985), supporters of natural studies, leaned toward the position that reality was constructed in the minds of individuals. If reality was constructed by each individual, then there was an infinite number of constructions to be made; hence, multiple perceptions and multiple realities (meanings). Jorgensen (1989) stated that people make sense of the world around them through daily encounters and experiences. The qualitative researcher's task was to find the multiple realities (truths) and develop an understanding of the participants and events.

According to Merriam (1988), qualitative research dealt with the real world--the world which involved people

interacting, and it was a highly subjective phenomenon which needed to be interpreted instead of measured. Wolcott (1988) suggested that ethnographic research sought to understand how things were and how they got that way. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), "an in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid" (p. 145).

Understanding the nature and process of shared governance at Optima Elementary could best be achieved through the use of qualitative research techniques. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to view the whole process and the meanings attached to the events under study. The meanings that people attached to real experiences provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the phenomena under study. The interactions of these perceptions and the interactions between people constituted a holistic picture of Optima and the change process.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the bottom-up initiative of the faculty at Optima Elementary which carried them through the planning and implementation stages of a site-based management plan. The primary objective of the study was to describe the change process at Optima

Elementary as site-based management was implemented. As a result of examining the primary objective, this study: (1) described the factors which contributed to the implementation of site-based management at Optima Elementary during the years 1989-96; (2) illustrated the concepts in the literature that helped explain the forces which impacted the changes made at Optima Elementary; and (3) generated and expanded naturalistic generalizations from the data collected into an "analytic description" of the changes which occurred at Optima Elementary (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 3).

Method

The Case Study

Case study was defined as an investigation of a specific phenomenon within a bounded system (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1988). Usually the bounded system was formed for a common sense purpose such as a school or a particular group (Merriam, 1988). The case study was also determined "to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process" and "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study" (Becker, 1968, p. 233).

"Schools are complex real-life entities" (Vargus, 1992, p.17). Researching real-life problems in schools generally lent itself to the case study method because schools dealt

directly with people and many complex processes (Turney & Rob, 1971). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 33) supported the case study use for an "intense, in-depth examination" of a phenomenon. The case study provided the researcher with an approach to find out what made the site special and unique (Yin, 1994). Merriam (1988) stated that "because of its strength, case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education" (p.23). Case study allowed the researcher to study several variables at once rather than to look at each variable separately. When educational change or improvement was the focus, case study was appropriate because it involved the examination and understanding of real programs, processes, and problems (Merriam, 1988). Understanding and describing the process was a primary focus of case studies (Merriam, 1988).

When making the decision concerning the appropriateness of case study, Merriam (1988) suggested the researcher consider certain conditions. First, the objectives should focus on humanistic outcomes or cultural differences. The intense data gathering techniques offer necessary insight into the changes which occurred. Second, the aim of the study was to provide a compelling, interpretation of what occurred from the participants' perspectives. Third, the site or situation was unique. Fourth, the case study could be justified if there was a need to leave a descriptive account of what happened due to its historical significance.

A case study format which incorporated qualitative techniques was selected for this study. The researcher was interested in studying the change process at a particular site, how the participants interacted with each other, and the multiple perceptions constructed as they evolved through the process. An "intrinsic case study" was well suited to this study (Stake, 1994, 237). An intrinsic case study was undertaken because a particular case was of primary interest to the researcher. This researcher was interested in understanding the change process at Optima and what made Optima a unique school. Through an intensive study of Optima Elementary, the researcher obtained a holistic view of the school and its changes within its natural setting as the school progressed toward a site-based management plan.

Like other research designs, case study had strengths and limitations. According to Merriam (1988), the case study strengths included: (1) could investigate "complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon"; (2) was anchored in real-life situations and results in a rich, holistic account of the phenomenon; (3) offered insights into the participants' constructed meanings; and (4) "educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice" (p. 32). Case study limitations included: (1) the amount of time and money

devoted to the project; (2) it could be viewed as too lengthy or too detailed for policymakers to read and use; (3) researchers could oversimplify or exaggerate a situation which leads to an erroneous conclusion; and (4) there could be a problem with ensuring researchers were ethical. To prevent limitations from jeopardizing the results of this study, the researcher collected data systematically and uniformly according to the study's design and kept her personal biases in mind as data were collected.

Data Selection and Sampling

The population chosen for the study was a "naturally bounded" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 62) group which worked together within a single school, Optima Elementary. Optima Elementary, a small, rural, elementary school was located in a southeast Georgia community. In 1981, Optima High School was consolidated into the county seat of LaMont. The Optima community gathered local support and persuaded the local school board to leave the elementary school in place and house grades K-5 there. The Optima community had always been a close community and very supportive of the schools.

The natural boundedness of Optima Elementary provided the researcher with a finite sample of individuals who had "real experiences" with the implementation of site-based management. The study examined events beginning during the

school year 1989-90 with the principal's initiation of a leadership team. The study covered the time span in which the former principal was involved with the site-based management plan as principal. Although the former principal moved to the central office in June of 1994, she continued to be involved as the school changed leadership under a new principal. The study combined the historical perspective of the implementation of site-based management as told by the actual participants with the researcher's own observations and interpretations as she gathered the data and interacted with the participants. This study was bounded to a seven year (1989-1996) period.

The participants were selected to provide a variety of different perspectives. The participants in this study included the original members of the leadership team at Optima Elementary, faculty members who served on the team and were at Optima during 1989-1994, faculty members who were no longer at Optima, a paraprofessional, a parent from the Local School Advisory Council, the former and current principal at the school level and the former curriculum director from the central office. A community member was interviewed to obtain significant information relevant to the uniqueness of Optima Elementary and its culture. The role the participants played was dependent on their level of involvement in the change process. Some participants had a significant role in the study and were interviewed with a

semistructured format while others were interviewed with an unstructured format.

A key informant was a person who had extensive knowledge regarding the phenomenon under study, was willing to talk to the researcher and willing to be interviewed extensively and possibly more than once (Jorgensen, 1989). The key informants in this study were the former curriculum director, the former principal, and the current principal. Other key informants included the original members of the Excellent School Program Team and those who served on the team from 1989-1993. Key informants (Jorgensen, 1989) should help the researcher with data collection and be willing for the researcher to call them to seek information or clarification on certain points during the study.

Data Collection

Access to the site in the study was made possible through the former principal. The former principal discussed the study with the superintendent and other central office staff, the new principal at Optima Elementary, and the faculty of the school. The former principal viewed the study as an opportunity to record the school's history. Approval was granted by the superintendent for the researcher to proceed with the study. Prior to beginning data collection, the researcher met with

the Optima faculty to discuss the purpose of the study and what role they would play as participants.

The researcher visited the site prior to data collection in order to begin establishing a trusting relationship with the participants. Building and maintaining trust is important to the qualitative researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "Mutual trust, respect, and cooperation" were important in developing a "reciprocal relationship" where both the participant and the researcher gained something from the research (Patton, 1980, p. 172). The relationship was additionally secured by the researcher participating in as many of the school functions as was possible.

Observations

Two methods of data collection used in the study were observations and interviews. As observer, the researcher viewed events as they occurred and observed the participant's behavior first-hand (Merriam, 1988). The lives of the participants became routine and they could leave out information which seemed unimportant to them. With observation, the researcher may record something which may lead to understanding of the phenomenon. Collecting the stories which surrounded the planning and implementation of site-based management at Optima was an important part of data collection. These stories and perceptions of the

informants helped collaborate information found in the meetings and documents during the implementation period.

"Participant observation serves to elicit from people their definitions of reality and the organizing constructs of their world" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.196). Through participant observation, a description could be written which described the event, who was involved, how things occurred, and what meanings participants attached to events and particular situations (Jorgenson, 1989). According to Jorgenson (1989):

Participant observation is exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds. (p. 12)

Participant observation ranged across a continuum from being a full participant--the researcher was a part of the study group--to the researcher being only an observer and having no interaction with the participants (Merriam, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

In this study, the variety of data gathering methods used also helped substantiate the information obtained. The researcher described the events through personal recollections, anecdotes, and quotations of the staff members involved from the inception of the idea of site-

based management until its actual implementation. To accomplish this, a combination of qualitative research techniques associated with participant observation was used. Historical documents such as desk logs, letters, minutes of team meetings, memorandums, and written reports were organized into a chronological order to depict the events as they occurred. Gottschalk (1967, p. 90) discussed four general rules when determining which historical documents were reliable sources of information: (1) the time-lapse between the event and the witnesses' recollection of the event affected the reliability of the information, the document was more accurate the closer it was made to the event; (2) the author's intent for the document affected its reliability, the more serious the purpose, the more dependable the document; (3) the fewer individuals intended to read the document, the more reliable the document; and (4) the more expertise the reporter or observer had, the more reliable the report. It was important that the researcher judge the reliability of each document that was used in the study.

The researcher attended council meetings and faculty meetings at Optima. Field notes were audio taped immediately after the researcher left the site. The tapes were then transcribed into a chronological format which reflected a description of the setting, the people, and the activities observed. While observing, the researcher made

notations which reflected the researcher's hunches or interpretations of what was being observed (Merriam, 1988).

The researcher masked the identity of the school and the individuals who participated in the study. The locations were masked in the study as Optima Elementary, Optima community, LaMont, and the county seat as Creek County. The individuals who participated were labeled with letters of the alphabet. Masking the study reduced the possibility of any harm or loss which could occur to individuals as a result of participating in the study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Interviews

In addition to the use of participant observation, the researcher interviewed various individuals as another primary source of data collection. Interviews were a primary source of information in qualitative case studies and go "hand in hand with participant observation" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 363). A common form of the interview was a person-to-person interview which generated conversation as a means of obtaining information (Merriam, 1988). The interview was important to an in-depth case study because the researcher needed to find out information other than what she had observed first hand. The researcher needed to know the thoughts, feelings, and meanings attached to the events by the participants in order to develop insights into

the participant's world (Patton, 1980). Patton (1980) stated that the purpose of the interview "is to allow us to enter the other person's perspective" (p. 196).

Interviewing was especially important when the researcher was interested in past events which could only be obtained through recollections of individuals who actually participated in the events (Merriam, 1988). It was important for the researcher to study the experiences as a whole and not try to isolate the past from the present (Edson, 1980).

In most qualitative case studies, the researcher combined several types of interviews into the study (Merriam, 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The type of interview used depends on the type of information sought by the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). One type of interview was the *structured interview* which had a particular set of questions which the researcher did not deviate from and the questions were asked in a particular order (Fontana & Frey, 1994). On the opposite end of the spectrum was the *unstructured interview*. The unstructured interview was mostly exploratory and predetermined questions were not used (Merriam, 1988). Unstructured interviews could be used to generate questions for later interviews or to develop insights and understanding (Merriam, 1988; Fontana & Frey, 1994). The *semistructured interview* could

have predetermined questions but the format was not as rigid as a structured interview. In the semistructured interview, the researcher could rephrase questions, move to other questions as they occur in the conversation, and give prompts to aide understanding (Merriam, 1988). *Group interviews*, gaining in popularity among social scientists, were used with structured, semistructured, and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994, 364). The group interview was an additional option which could provide a different perspective on the event and its participants (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The researcher encouraged the group to reflect and discuss the phenomenon thus generating ideas for individual interview questions and providing the researcher with valuable insights into the culture of the group (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

In the case study of Optima Elementary, the researcher used a combination of semistructured, unstructured, and group interviews. Most of the staff that was involved in the site-based management plan were still at the school and were available for interviews. The members of the staff which had retired typically lived in the local community. The researcher compared an employee list from 1989-90 to a list of employees for 1994-95. The researcher inquired about each individual that was no longer at the school and

chose to interview teachers who taught in neighboring LaMont.

The researcher began the study by interviewing the teachers at each grade level as a group. The group interview gave the teachers the opportunity to talk freely about their experiences and get comfortable with interviewing. The group interview gave the researcher additional information on the types of questions which needed to be asked later in the individual interviews.

Vital to the study were the individual interviews with key informants such as the former and current principal, and the team leaders since 1990. These key informants were interviewed with the semistructured interview. Using the semistructured interview allowed the researcher to ask the key informants the same questions, but not jeopardize important information which could occur without the rigid format of a structured interview.

Other individuals significant to this study (including parents, community leaders, and the former curriculum director) were interviewed using the unstructured interview. The unstructured interview consisted of a set of issues or concepts that the researcher wanted to discuss in an informal or conversational manner. Toward the end of data collection, the researcher needed to clarify or discuss issues which emerged during data collection with one of the key informants. The researcher used the unstructured

interview for clarification. All interviews were audio tape-recorded (with permission) and transcribed into written form as soon as possible to ensure authenticity. After the interviews, the researcher recorded her thoughts and impressions which aided interpretations made later and was not evident on the recordings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

"Informed consent" meant that the researcher provided the participants with full information about the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 291). Information was provided to the participants about the focus of the study, how data would be collected, how confidentiality would be protected, what the potential benefits and risks were, and what feedback the school would receive when the study was complete (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All participants signed consent forms prior to participating in the study with the understanding that participation was voluntary.

Validity and Reliability

Traditional notions of external validity had been a major concern of the single-case study research in that the results may not be generalizable to a similar population. Yin (1989) stated that generalizing a sample to a larger population was inappropriate in case study methodology because a case study's validity was based on its conceptual generalizability (to theories and propositions, not populations):

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiments, does not represent a "sample", and the researcher's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not enumerate frequencies (as with statistical generalization). (p. 21)

The findings from this study were not intended to be generalized to other populations. The intent of the study was to expand the understanding of the concepts and processes involved when site-based management was implemented in one rural elementary school.

To increase the validity of the study's findings, Denzin (1978) suggested the technique referred to as triangulation. Denzin (1970) defined triangulation as using multiple sources of data, multiple methods, or multiple investigators to support the research findings. Designing a study with multiple data collection methods contributed to triangulation, by corroborating and disconfirming data which greatly strengthened the study's usefulness for other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Through triangulation, the researcher improved the flaws of one data collection technique by combining it with the strengths of another--thus increasing the strength of the study (Denzin, 1970).

The triangulation technique was important because the corroborative evidence provided accuracy to the researcher's perceptions and contributed to the study's reliability and validity.

Webb (1966) proposes that triangulation of methods is worth doing because it makes the data believable: Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes. If a proposition can survive the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures, with all their irrelevant error, confidence should be placed in it. (p. 3)

Reliability, in the traditional sense, referred to the extent to which a study could be replicated by following the same research methods and procedures (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Exact replication was not appropriate in qualitative research since this kind of research was not intended to establish causation. Rather, it sought to describe and explain what had happened (Merriam, 1988). Instead of the conventional terms, four new terms were suggested in combination with naturalistic studies: (1) "credibility (in place of internal validity); (2) transferability (in place of external validity); (3) dependability (in place of reliability); and (4) confirmability (in place of

objectivity)" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), regarding the data as "dependable" in a qualitative study denoted that it was also reliable (p. 219).

The researcher checked the information obtained in the interviews against other sources of information (such as official minutes from meetings, written documents, and other respondents' interviews) as data collection progressed. A key informant was asked to read a draft of the descriptive narrative in order to corroborate the accuracy of events.

Data

As the data were collected, categories began to emerge and analysis began. The researcher used the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of analysis which meant that as data was collected it was simultaneously compared against patterns which were emerging from the data. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989, p. 113), "the researcher is guided by initial concepts and guiding hypotheses, but shifts or discards them as additional data are collected and analyzed." The study was flexible enough to consider other categories that developed or related concepts that emerged during data collection. As the process evolved, it was necessary for the researcher to go back to collect additional data on themes which emerged during analysis. The themes emerged gradually, and the

constant comparison from data to the theme continued until all themes had been discovered.

Once the data were collected and transcribed using a word processor, they were entered into a qualitative analysis computer program named QSR NUD.IST. QSR NUD.IST was chosen by the researcher because it had the capability to do more than code and retrieve information. QSR NUD.IST had the ability to generate theory, make linkages between the coded pieces of data, create memos for the categories, and it had the capability to code on-screen. The computer program allowed the researcher to manage and explore large quantities of non-numerical data simultaneously in a user friendly environment. The anticipated categories derived from the literature were placed in the computer's index system and were referred to as index trees. During analysis, an additional category derived from the data was entered into the index system. The data collected (from interviews and historical documents) were loaded into the NUD.IST program. The researcher indexed the data to the various categories on the trees. The coded data were then sorted into the various categories by the NUD.IST program so the researcher could better define which pieces of data were the most relevant to the Optima story.

Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to this part of analysis as "data reduction" (p. 11). Data reduction was the part of analysis where the researcher made choices

concerning which "data chunks to code", which to leave out, which patterns best summarized the data chunks, and which story to tell (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Data reduction was sorting, discarding, and organizing data so conclusions could be drawn from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researcher used data derived from participant observation, interviews, and historical documents to prepare an "analytic description" (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 3) of the change process at Optima Elementary. This blend of methods and techniques was well suited to create an "analytic description" of a "complex social organization" (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 3). The analytic description:

- (1) employs the concepts, propositions, and empirical generalizations of a body of scientific theory as the basic guides in analysis and reporting,
- (2) employs thorough and systematic collection, classification, and reporting of facts, and (3) generates new empirical generalizations (and perhaps concepts and propositions as well) based on these data. Thus, an analytic description is primarily an empirical application and modification of scientific theory rather than an efficient and powerful test of such a theory. (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 3)

An analytic description was compiled into a narrative format to relay the story of Optima.

Descriptive Narrative

The descriptive narrative of a case study presented the researcher's findings in a narrative format. The purpose of the narrative was to present the data through a "thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125) which provided the reader with the understanding and meaning of the phenomenon studied. Patton, (1990) described what qualitative data looked like by stating:

Qualitative data consists of quotations from people and descriptions of situations, events, interactions, and activities. The purpose of this data is to understand the point of view and experiences of other persons. (p. 36)

The story of Optima Elementary and its uniqueness was related by the researcher in the descriptive narrative. The events which occurred were reconstructed and portrayed as accurately as possible from the perspective of those persons experiencing the events. Interviews, observations, and the analysis of written documents provided a basis for preparing a descriptive narrative of the school's move towards implementing site-based management.

The descriptive narrative was written in a style which reflects the case study format. Patton (1980) wrote that

the case study should "take the reader into the case situation, a person's life, a group's life, or a program's life" (p. 304). Merriam (1988) adds:

detailed description of particulars is needed so that the reader can vicariously experience the setting of the study; detailed description is also necessary for the reader to assess the evidence upon which the researcher's analysis is based.
(p. 199)

The data were presented from the perspective of the participants and how they interpreted their reality. According to Patton, (1980) "sufficient description and direct quotations" from the persons involved are essential to allowing the reader to enter into the "situation and thoughts of the people" in the story (p. 343).

In this case study, writing the narrative was an important part of the research process. The researcher had an integral part in deciding how the case study would be related to other readers. "It is the researcher who decides what is the case's own story, or at least what of the case's own story he or she will report" (Stake, 1994, p. 240). This researcher decided to tell Optima's story by using a mixture of chronological events and a discussion of the major categories which emerged during analysis. The researcher decided which stories needed to be told to best create the description of the process at Optima, which

stories to discard, and how the data were to be presented in the narrative.

The participants' perspectives and the multiple meanings they attached to the events at Optima were intertwined with the researcher's own perspective of what happened to create the narrative. The researcher's biases included the belief that educational research was most appropriately done in natural settings and with real participants. Also, the researcher agreed with the need to reform education and was interested in actively seeking ways which could be successful to creating a difference.

Summary

Throughout the United States, many schools implemented site-based management in an effort to reform education. This study examined the process one school, Optima Elementary, used to implement SBM. Qualitative research techniques, in combination with the case study format, were utilized to develop an analytic description of an actual school that implemented shared governance.

Data collection consisted of a combination of interviews, participant observation, and a review of historical documents. Participants of the study included significant persons from the school site, the central office, parents, and community members. Data were analyzed by utilizing a combination of constant comparison with a

computer software package called QSR NUD.IST. The data were displayed in a written narrative with numerous quotations from the participants to create a vivid description of the planning and implementation process of SBM at Optima Elementary.

CHAPTER IV

OPTIMA ELEMENTARY: THE STORY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of site-based management at Optima Elementary by using various research techniques associated with qualitative research. The objectives were to provide the reader with an accurate description of the events which occurred at Optima as told from the perspective of the participants during the bounded (Stake, 1988) period of 1988-1996. The descriptions in this chapter were based on a combination of individual and group interviews, leadership meeting agendas and minutes, and other school documents which included League of Professional School Reports.

The chapter is arranged in two major sections. The first section tells Optima's story in a chronological order depicting some of the major events which occurred during the years 1988-1996. The second section provides the major themes which kept recurring during analysis and are vital to the understanding of Optima Elementary.

History of School Improvement Efforts

(1987-1988 to 1988-1989)

The Central Office Perspective

The central office in Creek County had a small staff of administrators. There was a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, and a curriculum director which performed many different jobs and wore many hats. The current superintendent and the majority of the former superintendents who lead the school system were from the local area and were former coaches voted into office by the community (Interview with P, 4/29/96; Interview with Y, 4/29/96). The superintendents during this time span were supportive of the system's schools and their improvement efforts as long as they stayed similar in nature (Interview with Q, 3/5/96; Interview with Y, 4/29/96). The curriculum director had the main responsibility of coordinating programs, working closely with the schools to update curriculum, and generally keeping the system moving forward (Interview with Q, 3/5/96; Interview with T, 2/6/96). The curriculum director worked in her position from 1973 until 1994 and had served with four different superintendents (Interview with Y, 4/29/96).

The curriculum director was an advocate of school improvement. She went to numerous conferences to keep abreast of changes being made in other systems. "... we at the central office, you know, were real concerned with

school improvement" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 9).

I used to go to a lot of conferences. In fact, I went to all I could go to, you know, help improve myself. I would hear about different things and bring the ideas back." (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 29)

The central office provided many different types of professional development for both the teachers and administrators (ESP Minutes, September 20, 1993). The curriculum director felt that staff development was necessary if the rural school system was going to be knowledgeable about innovations and ideas being tried in other areas of Georgia and the United States.

We have so many people who, you know, who were local, including the administrators who have not, you know, been exposed to ideas and who are, to tell the truth, not that much interested in them. You just have to go out and seek them out, the ideas. (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 45)

In the mid-1980s, the central office required all schools in the system to form a parent advisory committee for their school. Each school formed a Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC) at the curriculum director's request. Each committee's membership included a teacher, a parent, a community businessman, and the principal. The

committee's charge was to involve parents and the community in the school (Interview with Y, 4/29/96). Even though LSAC was a mandated group, the principal commented:

Probably the beauty of it was that those people came on a pretty regular basis and talked about how we could improve our school. It [LSAC] was probably the original school improvement vehicle. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text units 57 & 59)

In 1988, at the curriculum director's initiative, the central office staff and all of the principals went to a conference featuring Pat Sajack in Athens, Georgia. The major thrust of that conference was using school governance to do things differently in schools (Interview with Y, 4/29/96; Interview with Q, 3/5/96). As a result of that conference, all schools in the Creek County School System established some type of leadership team. Optima Elementary made an honest effort at a leadership team but "the other schools just went through the motions" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 98). The curriculum director also remarked:

But some of them -- no, some of them didn't even play around with it. Oh, some of the schools formed committees and did this and did that, and it sort of fizzled out with them because they didn't assume the leadership role and make it happen. Not force it

to happen-- enable it to happen. (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 102)

The trip to Athens led to discussions among the administrators about necessary elements of staff development needed if a school was interested in school governance. The group also discussed the need for increased collaboration among teachers and between teachers and administrators (Interview with Y, 4/29/96). Conflict resolution training for the entire system was one outcome of the conference in Athens and it proved to be instrumental for Optima and the course of improvement it would take as stated by the principal, "Now to me that [conflict resolution training] was key though at the time we had it, but I didn't know that it was" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 39). The staff development activities of the system and the dialogue between the principal and the curriculum director shifted the principal toward a new idea, "that was probably the first time that I had actually tuned into, hey, this is a system [shared governance] that might work in my school" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 5).

Optima Elementary

Optima Elementary is located in a small, rural community in Southeast Georgia. In 1981, the county school system consolidated its middle and high schools and transported students in grades 7-12 into the county seat.

Optima Elementary was built in 1982 to replace the old elementary school and students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade remained in the community school (NOVA, 1993).

The community surrounding Optima has a history of being a "close knit" and caring community. The citizens are heavily involved in church, community activities, and most of all, the school (ESP Minutes, March 6, 1990). When the county consolidated grades 7-12, the Optima community was very upset. The people in this small community tend to stick together when threatened, and they perceived the closing of their high school as a threat to the longevity of their community (Interview with P, 4/29/96; Interview with W, 2/6/96; Interview with Y, 4/29/96). The citizens were unified in their efforts to keep the elementary school:

If we stick together, they listen. They will listen to us as quick if not quicker than some of the other folks, simply because we are united... If it had not been for the consolidation, we would not have a new school in Optima. They [Board] had to give us that to get it [consolidation] passed.... (Interview with P, 4/29/96, Text units 76 & 48)

The citizens transferred the loyalty and pride they felt for their high school to the new elementary school. One teacher reflected:

They [citizens] focused in and zoomed in. You can pick up the telephone and call anybody in town and if they can't do it for you, they'll find somebody who can. This [Optima Elementary] is their pride and joy, just like their own children. We have people who have no children, never had children, who live in this community and do things [for the school].... (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 227)

In the fall of 1987, the principal presented the idea of participating in Georgia's School of Excellence competition to the faculty of Optima Elementary (NOVA, 1993). The school had been in existence for five years with the same principal and had established a positive reputation in the community. Six teachers volunteered to work on the application form and serve as the committee responsible for the initial groundwork (NOVA, 1993). Upon review of the eligibility requirements, which included improved test scores over a 3-year period, the committee recognized that Optima Elementary would not be eligible because student scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills had not improved in the previous three years. This acknowledgment by the faculty served as a catalyst for change in trying to make improvements in the school (NOVA, 1993).

In 1988, Optima participated along with other schools in the system by establishing leadership teams at each

school. Each principal selected a group of teachers to form a leadership team at the school to increase collaboration and make improvements in curriculum. The principal selected teachers from across grade levels so everyone would be represented but expressed, "It had no structure in them [teachers] deciding how it operated. I said we will have a leadership team. Here we are, we got a leadership team" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 31).

There was much discussion among team members about the name of the team. It was very important to the group that they not be perceived as being an elitist group by the rest of the faculty. One member of the original team stated, "We didn't want them to think that it was a club of exclusive members" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 77). The selected group rejected the idea of being called a leadership team because "we felt like it gave the connotation of 'we are more important than y'all'" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 31). They arrived at the name Excellent School Program Team when a teacher from outside the group walked through where the team was having the discussion and said "Why don't y'all call yourselves the Excellent School Program and call yourself the ESP?" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 31). The ESP name was accepted and has been used by the group since that day.

Various members of the faculty recall the original Excellent School Program Team doing very little except

getting established and starting a dialogue with the principal and other teachers. One person said "it was like a person from each grade level to do cross grade level planning and looking at what's going on before you and after you. We would meet once in awhile, but nothing was ever really done with it, okay" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text units 37 & 43). The principal looks back at the first leadership team as the initiation of many housekeeping agendas without anything major taking place except for the conflict resolution training held during that time (Interview with Q, 3/5/96).

I could not seem to focus it on instruction. We did lots of housekeeping things, that's normal but it's also indicative of what teachers want to kind of get cleared up first. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 35)

The principal and teachers agreed that the first leadership team was not teacher driven. The principal served as chair and brought the agendas to the meetings (League Report-2, 4/25/91, Text unit 36) as reflected by a teacher "it was more handed down to us, okay" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 39).

According to the principal, about a year later the ESP began to lose steam, "that leadership team that we originally started with was just fizzling like crazy and all the other schools by then had pretty much fizzled out too"

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 25; Interview with Y, 4/29/96).

Orientation: The Beginning

During the fall of 1989, the principal received a letter from the University of Georgia stating that they were forming The League of Professional Schools and that an orientation session was going to be held in Tifton in January (Personal Communication, January 19, 1990). The focus was on school reform and making improvements in schools through shared governance. Schools across the state were invited to send a group if they were interested. The principal felt that this session might give the original ESP the direction it needed and shared the letter with various members of the original ESP and asked them what they thought about it (Interview with Q, 3/5/96 & W, 2/6/96). The general agreement among those asked was that a group needed to go and check it out. One member stated, "We were all kind of excited to see what it was about" (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 5). According to one person, "that [idea of shared governance] kind of appealed to us, you know, we can make some of the decisions, the principal doesn't have to do all of it" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 7).

The letter requested a team of five, so the principal and four teachers she selected off the original ESP team attended the meeting (Interview with X, 2/7/96; Interview

with Q, 3/5/96; Interview with W, 2/6/96). Reflecting back on those teachers who were chosen to go, one teacher surmised that the principal had chosen them because they "were strong teachers, could share information well..." and the staff related well to them (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 69).

The principal viewed the League orientation session as an opportunity to help the staff understand that they were capable of more and better things.

I kept talking to the staff about, we're not reaching our potential, we're doing a lot of neat things, a lot of good things, but as you look at the core of instruction we are not doing what I think we can do. And I couldn't seem to get that message... it was almost like everybody measured us by a foot ruler and there was a yard stick, but nobody knew it. So I kept on and on. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 17)

In reflection, the principal remarked, "the [orientation] session "just touched our moment" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 27). The principal stated:

During that meeting three or four different times, people would turn and look at me and say this is what you've been talking about isn't it. And I was sitting there thinking, "This is what I've been

talking about, I wonder why I couldn't say it."

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 21)

The session was very motivating and meaningful for the teachers (Interview with X, 2/7/96). According to the principal, those who attended the orientation were really motivated by what they heard:

It was just a really good session for us. It got people really motivated and at that point and time and they came back and the faculty... those five folks became the core that got us started.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 23)

This group of five named themselves the PSI Task Force. While they were at the orientation meeting, they made plans for presenting the material about the League to the rest of the faculty (League Planning Document, January 19, 1990). The materials were divided between the four teachers who would present to the faculty.

We had a faculty meeting and said this is what we learned, this is the way the system operates. To start with it [the meeting] was mandatory, an administrative decision, you will listen and then you make your option. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 51).

Another teacher on the Task Force made these remarks about the presentation to the faculty:

I think that's where you lose a lot of people because we were so impressed by who he [Glickman] was and what he had to say, then you get us "ding-dongs" up there trying to present it... It's just not the same, a gung-ho spirit you know, but....

(Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 59)

The teachers presented the information and after a few days the faculty came back together for their questions to be answered (League Planning Document, January 19, 1990). The entire faculty voted to join the League without any marked dissension (Interview with group L-O, 1/8/96). One person expressed, "I think it was basically like with anything new, you might be apprehensive, but eager, you know. We had all of those feelings" (Interview with group L-O, 1/8/96, Text unit 48). Others expressed concern over the amount of added work, the extra time that was going to be required for it to work and just what type of decisions teachers would be making (Interview with T, 2/6/96; Interview with group A-F, 1/9/96).

Even though there were some normal concerns, the faculty supported the decision to join and one teacher stated, "there seemed to be a lot of pride. Pride in the fact that they were charter members of the League" (Interview with group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 65). A teacher who is no longer at the school remembers the information being presented "pretty honestly," the pros and cons were

both given and we made the decision to join (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 95).

The PSI Task Force continued to function and its members were actually members of the original and present ESP teams too (League Report #2, 4/25/91). It had been decided by the PSI group that it was necessary for them to stay intact for the first few years so that there could be some cohesiveness and someone would have and understand the whole picture (Interview with X, 2/7/96 & Interview with U and V, 2/21/96). According to one of the original five:

We felt like if we could stay on there for three years and have some continuity of what was going on there, then the rotation started. We had more on the team besides us so we had others that were rotating off too.... (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 141)

"The principal felt like it was better for five of us to really understand what was going on rather than have the information spread among fifteen different people and nobody have the whole picture" (Interview with X, 2/7/96/, Text unit 141). Another member of the PSI Group stated, "We kept that group because there was that total knowledge, we had the whole package" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 103). The five members of this group were also the ones that went to the League meetings for the first two years and would report back to the rest of the present ESP team.

The name of the group was not a big issue this time. The group took the opportunity to merge the leadership team required by the central office (original ESP) with the group they were starting as a part of the League (present ESP). In discussing how the decision was made about the team name, one teacher said:

I don't know if we voted on it or not, but if we had to have it anyway, there wasn't a use in making an ESP and a PSI [League term]. It gets bad enough as it is and that was why, just keep things simple and not have too many things going on. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 113)

Another teacher remarked on keeping the ESP name by saying that "it was just easy to keep it, it was already there and it made sense. It just fit" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 95).

One of the first tasks to accomplish was to establish who would be on the present ESP team. It was decided that only teachers in grades kindergarten through sixth would serve on the team for the remainder of that first year (Interview with W, 2/6/96; League report-2, 4/25/91). "The PSI bunch" automatically stayed on the team (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 125). Those who were currently serving on the original ESP team and wanted to continue, asked the teachers in their grade whether they wanted them to stay on

the team or be replaced by another person in their grade. A member of the original ESP team commented:

We decided that if we didn't do one person from every grade level that the information would not get back and forth. So, those who were on it and wished to stay, stayed. We talked about it in our grade level. "Do you want me to stay or do you want to take your turn?" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 79)

The present ESP team set up a regular monthly meeting on the first Monday of each month (ESP Minutes, February 8, 1990). The principal allocated two hours of release time during the school day for the members to meet so they would not have to stay after school (Interview with Q, 3/5/96). The following Tuesday, each member was supposed to report back to their grade what was discussed at ESP and bring feedback from their grade to the next ESP meeting (Interview with R, 2/7/96; Interview with U-V, 2/21/96). One member of the present ESP team served as secretary and presented the members with minutes of the meeting within two days of the monthly meeting (Interview with X, 2/7/96; ESP Minutes, February 8, 1990). Copies of the minutes were not given to all faculty members but a copy was available for them to read if they wished to (Interview with X, 2/7/96; ESP Minutes, February 8, 1990).

Another major concern was defining how decisions would be made within the present ESP group and the school. The principal commented:

We got real hung-up on making the rules, because that's one of the first things they [Glickman's organization] suggest you do is to decide how things are going to be done. Because if you don't it is always in question so we even had it down to who counted votes when we voted and who would be present when the votes were counted. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 97)

The present ESP team wrote by-laws which would outline how decisions would be made at Optima (ESP Minutes, February 8, 1990). The entire faculty was involved on issues which had school-wide interests. The faculty would cast a secret ballot and issues voted on required a majority to pass (League Report-2, 4/25/91). The present ESP made the decision on which issues would be brought before the faculty for a vote. "Process of elimination and importance" was used to determine which issues needed a faculty vote (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 183). In the beginning stages of shared governance at Optima, the ability to vote was important and used frequently. One member of the present ESP stated:

We voted on everything. What color do we paint these dots, you know, and then it got to the

point... go back and talk with your grade level about it to see if it matters what color these dots are. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 183)

For the remainder of that school year the present ESP team worked on informing and educating the faculty about shared governance and establishing goals for the next school year (ESP Minutes, February 8, 1990).

The First Year: 1990-1991

The first full year was a very active one for Optima Elementary. In the fall, the PSI Task Force attended the first annual League Conference at the King and Prince Hotel on St. Simons Island, Georgia (ESP Minutes, November 5, 1990). At the conference, schools presented new and innovative things they had implemented at their schools that had been successful to the schools attending. The PSI group was very excited:

We would go off and you'd hear all these great ideas and we'd come back and we'd have it planned out, just about as planned out as you could get it cause we would be in the car just clicking and you know it is your first couple of years and you're not... whipped out already. Like, man, we could do this and could do this and we were so

excited. We'd get back and we'd hit it. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 87)

While at the fall conference, the PSI group heard about a Pep Rally which emphasized students' successes and promoted self-esteem which the group thought would be great for their students at Optima. The PSI group had the project planned out before they got back to school:

We kind of planned it while we were there and planned it on the way home. We came back and we were ready to go. We knew what we wanted to do... all we did was say, this is what we want to do. How do you feel about it? We talked it up in our team level planning meetings and then we came back and voted on it. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 165).

About halfway through the year, the ESP team realized that by just having grade representatives on the team that the support personnel like special education, music, physical education, etc., were not represented. The ESP added a person to represent those groups plus two paraprofessionals were added to represent their group (Interview with W, 2/6/96). Traditionally, the support personnel and paraprofessionals have not kept an established routine of meeting with their groups. The two groups have usually met with which grade level they have the best working relationship with or the grade level with greatest

proximity to their own classroom. One paraprofessional commented that her group could meet separately on their own if they wanted to, "It's just an organizing thing" (Interview with S, 4/17/96, Text unit 102). The person representing the support group said that it is difficult to get the support people together to share what was discussed at ESP. She remarked, "Sometimes we do and sometimes we don't" (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text unit 69). Both the paraprofessional representative and the support personnel representative felt like the communication between the ESP and their groups needed some work and accepted the responsibility to do a better job (Interview with R, 2/7/96; Interview with S, 4/17/96).

During the second year, Optima's major effort at improvement was aimed at improving their students' attitudes and promoting self-esteem (Interview with Q, 3/5/96; League Report-2, 4/25/91; Interview with X, 2/7/96; League Planning Document, October, 1990). The school participated in programs such as the student pep rally which rewarded students for academic successes, attendance, etc.; all members of the faculty adopted a student considered at high-risk for failure and kept track of him/her all year; and everyone in the school and community participated in a yearly activity called Optima Proud (ESP Minutes, 1990-91; Interview with Q, 3/5/96).

Optima Proud was a week long series of activities centered around the school and community which had been started by the principal in 1987 (ESP Minutes, April 9, 1991). The principal had felt the need "to prove to the public that we were an okay place for your kids to be and we could take good care of your kids" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 69). In the early 1980s when grades seven through twelve had been consolidated into the county seat of Creek, Optima Elementary was viewed as a small, rural school which was lacking what was offered in LaMont (Interview with P, 4/29/96). The principal used Optima Proud to pull the community into the elementary school and create a sense of pride in their students (Interview with Y, 4/29/96; Interview with Q, 3/5/96). One citizen said:

We take pride in it [Optima] and our kids and what they accomplish, what the school does for our children. Like I say, we feel like it is the best thing around. (Interview with P, 4/29/96, Text unit 30)

At the ESP meetings instructional improvement began to be filtered into the dialogue, but the heaviest emphasis was still on housekeeping issues (League Report-2, 4/25/91; ESP Minutes, January 31, 1991). In fact, the instructional concerns were placed at the end of the agenda while things like trash pick-up, lunchroom noise, students in the hall

during recess, etc. were placed at the beginning (ESP Minutes, March, 1991). One teacher commented:

In the beginning, they did begin more with "nit picky" little stuff, you know, ...like somebody's "running the roads" out here at recess. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 61)

Several instructional ideas were launched during this year. "Chalk Talk" was held monthly and each teacher in the grade brought two ideas to discuss with his/her colleagues (Interview with Q, 3/5/96; ESP Minutes, August 15, 1990). Every six weeks, the teachers in each grade met together for a half-day to plan for the next six weeks and the teachers also attended a cooperative learning workshop held for interested teachers in the county (League Report-2, 4/25/91; ESP Minutes, January 31, 1991).

By spring of that year, some teachers still did not understand what the League was all about and how the decision-making process worked. Some members of the faculty had concerns about how decisions were made and if the staff was actually making the decisions or if it just appeared that way (League Report-2, 4/25/91). One of the PSI members stated, "We did have confusion to start with. Who was on ESP and who was on PSI? They were like, what is the difference between ESP and PSI..." (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 95). Another person on the PSI Task Force reflected that the confusion came from the faculty not

knowing or understanding how things were done (Interview with X, 2/7/96). This same teacher said that going into the second full year things got "shaky" (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 81). She stated:

I think as the year progressed, they kind of thought, well, its not really changing. We're going from [the principal] to this little group and this little group is now making the decisions.

(Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 81)

This attitude of not understanding how the ESP and PSI operated was also depicted in the report from the League after their first on-site visit in April, 1991. A segment of the report read:

There is a view and accompanying concern that the PSI Task Force is not a component of a larger shared decision-making process; rather, is a substitute for the principal in directing the decision-making in the school.... The faculty as a group, does not feel involved in or informed about the decision-making process....

(League Report-2, 4/25/91, Text units 46 & 74)

The League report reflected the need to review the PSI Task Force's role in the decision-making process at Optima. Its function and how it would operate in the future needed to be clarified (League Report-2, 4/25/91). Optima closed the school year by having a retreat at Glynn Place Suites in

Brunswick, Georgia (ESP Minutes, May 6, 1991). The majority of the faculty attended the retreat and it bound the group closer together (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96).

The Second Year: 1991-1992

The second year began with the ESP having refined and clarified its policies and procedures guiding the operation and management of the decision-making process (League Report-3, 2/3/92). A rotation system for membership was established which provided that each year one-third of the members were replaced and ESP membership was limited to two years instead of three (League Report-3, 2/3/92). This change addressed the concerns raised by the faculty the previous year and also provided continuity and new membership for the team each year.

The PSI members also saw the need to include others in the League meetings. Going to a League meeting added to the spirit of improvement:

We're so inhibited in this area of the world from the rest of the world in Atlanta... if we didn't go to those League meetings, we wouldn't have any idea of what was going on... I want to find out what the rest of the world is doing, I might not want to do it all... but I might want to do a little piece of it, you know. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 101)

The ESP team changed how they selected participants for the League meetings. The PSI Task Force no longer went to the League conferences as a lone group. The conference grouping was made up of two persons from the PSI Task Force who had been to a meeting before and two who had never participated (League Report-3, 2/3/92). Participating in a League meeting was indeed an issue as one teacher commented:

We had that basic problem for a long time. More people knowing more than others did and it didn't really level off until almost everybody had a chance to go to a League meeting to actually see what people were talking about. (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 47)

To increase the feeling among the faculty that they had a role in the shared governance process, the principal gave up her slot which enabled another faculty member to go to the League meetings (League Report-3, 2/3/92). In reflection, the principal does not feel like it was a wise decision:

I quit going for about a year and in all honesty I think that was a mistake. They came back with with all this information and all these ideas that I had not heard and so conveying the essence of what they had heard to me became difficult because I wasn't as enthusiastic about it... the reality

was I needed to be there. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 99)

The League Report agreed with the principal's assessment:

The rationale for the principal not attending is commendable, however, it also seems important that the principal participate as a member of the school's team in activities of the League.

(February 3, 1992, Text unit 35)

As issues were raised, the ESP did their best to address them and make what changes were needed. The members were the first ones to acknowledge that they did not have all the answers.

For one thing, you don't know really where to start, or we didn't. We kind of just floundered around and as we worked through this, it wouldn't be right so we'd have to rework it. (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 153)

One PSI member contrasted the difference between the process of the administrator simply telling teachers what to do and making the change to deciding yourself through shared governance. Refinement of the process along the journey can be expected:

The county said this is what you do and you did it. You're just robots and suddenly you can do whatever you want to do. You make the decision. So you have just let the cow out of the pen and

he is in the pasture and he's like--where do I go now? So we just kind of wandered around. We were accustomed to things being all lined out.

(Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 125)

In November of this school year, Optima looped back in their school improvement process to go back and come up with a mission statement (ESP Minutes, November 4, 1991). At the League fall conference in October, it had been emphasized that a mission statement was needed to guide your improvement efforts. The principal contacted an area Regional Education Service Agency consultant to come and lead the school through the process (Interview with Q, 3/5/96). In reflection regarding the writing of the mission statement, one teacher commented, "Oh God, that was so hard to do!" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 141). She stated that the formal statement didn't come before the writing of the charter, "it came later on down the road" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 149). The same teacher said Optima kind of "dabbled" with the mission statement until "finally one day we knew we had to come to terms with it; we worked forever to get it perfected or like we thought it should be" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 145). The same teacher added:

Two years ago we redid the whole thing. We started over again and brought it up to date to where we are and it doesn't look anything like it did to

start with. I think that's part of the growing process. (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 153)

During this year, there was still a significant amount of ESP time spent dealing with discipline and management issues. According to a League Report, management issues were handled in ESP while instructional decisions were still being made outside the ESP team (League Report-3, 2/3/92). Major instructional decisions like the establishment of the outdoor classroom and implementing school-wide thematic units were decided outside the team (League Report-3, 2/3/92). Other instructional and motivational programs started last year continued and a few new ones were adopted. Optima did begin to make a shift toward more instructional concerns. Optima broadened their instructional goal on the Action Plan to cover student achievement and incorporated their plans to work on self-esteem within the major goal of increasing student achievement (League Report-3, 2/3/92). This change unified the efforts made by the ESP toward a common goal instead of them working in fragmented pieces (League Report-3, 2/3/92).

Optima's efforts to make improvements in their school for themselves and the students was rewarded by receiving the Georgia School of Excellence Award in 1992 (ESP Minutes, December 2, 1991; Field Notes, 1/10/96, P. 4, Line 19). There was an intense amount of pride in their accomplishments. Winning the award validated the school's

success to the rest of the community. No other school in LaMont had ever received this honor. One teacher remarked, "We're the shining star of the county" (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 173). Another teacher considered shared governance a factor in Optima's success:

I think that because of the results of our shared governance that the community has noticed that our school is quote "a school of excellence" because we did obtain that reward several years ago. I think that we have earned the respect of the community and the Board and I think they look to Optima as being innovative in education and innovative in new strategies, staff development, and whatever. (Interview with Group G-K, 1/15/96, Text unit 70)

One teacher who is no longer at the school commented that she remembers the peak being "the year we earned the School of Excellence... That was a big thing, you know we all went to Atlanta" (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 352). She also remembers the amount of work involved that year and the previous two:

People gave hours and hours and hours and hours!
We all worked our butts off! It was not uncommon to leave from out there [Optima] until after dark.
You really didn't think anything about it. You just

did it. You wanted to. Everybody worked together.

(Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text units 133 & 135)

The curriculum director stated that through shared governance "the teachers learned how to work together and toward a common purpose. And that was instrumental in them winning the School of Excellence award" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 254).

The Third Year: 1992-1993

The third year was referred to as the year we hit "the slump," (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 240), one of our "valleys" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 111), or the year when things were "extremely frictional" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 113). The principal described the third year as having been "a real low" period for Optima and its encounters with shared governance (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 115).

The principal had foreseen the problems that the ESP team experienced during this year. The previous spring the election of the ESP chairman was done haphazardly:

Our leadership, instead of being thought through during the election process, somebody just said, "Well, why don't you do it... It's your turn."

Rather than think it through, our leadership weakened and when that weakened, the whole process weakened. When you have teachers who either did

not have the leadership or were not willing to execute.... (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 95)

The principal recalls the exact moment this leader was chosen and the principal realized that the teacher "didn't really have the desire to lead" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 115). The principal talked with one of the original ESP members and reminded her that the person in this position had to have some leadership skills or their governance process wouldn't survive. The principal fully expected the process to break down and the faculty to turn to this particular ESP member to lead Optima on through (Interview with Q, 3/5/96; Interview with X, 2/7/96).

The principal surmised that one reason Optima may have ended up with poor leadership the third year resulted from the rotation system:

It's a good thing in some ways and in other ways you have some people... if you had your really strong folks the first go round and you rotate... you know what is going to happen, your second go round... you may or may not have your leadership there. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 111)

There were few written records kept this year. The ESP meetings were inconsistent, agendas were not ready and things just did not get done (Interview with X, 2/7/96; Interview with Q, 3/5/96; Field Notes, 12/27,95, P. 2, Lines

30-31). In regard to the ESP chairman, one ESP member said she had offered the chairperson help and support that year. The same ESP member garnered assistance from other staff members to ease the burden on the chairman but around February, the chairman said she did not want the position anymore (Interview with X, 2/7/96). The principal recalls the chairman basically quitting:

She never said it officially, but she just quit doing anything. We would try to have a meeting and the agendas weren't ready. She just really didn't have the desire to do it and we fizzled.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 119)

The person who had been co-chairman accepted the responsibility as leader for the remainder of the third year and the next school term too (Interview with Q, 3/5/96).

Amid the controversy, Optima continued on the course the faculty and staff had mapped out. The team planning sessions and cross-grade level planning continued, a heavy emphasis was placed on cooperative learning, and they continued to participate in activities which promoted student self-esteem (League Report-1, 3/17/93). Although the work continued, a teacher who was new to the staff that year remembered everybody being "grumpy":

You go through cycles. You're real excited and you go, go, go and then everybody gets grumpy.

When I first came to Optima... everybody was

grumpy and it wasn't that they were not getting along, it was like they had worked so hard... they had done all this stuff... we were down and grumpy... it is part of the cycle.... (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96, Text unit 159)

Making sure everyone on Optima's faculty and staff was well-informed had always been a problem, but during the third year it hit an all-time low. The members of the PSI Task Force and the original members of the ESP were very frustrated. They had tried to rectify the issues which had made various faculty members feel left out and uninformed; yet, there was still the feeling of us and them. The principal remarked:

We would make efforts to include people to the point that one time the group decided to meet after school so everybody could go. The staff was small and so it was easy to feel like there was two different groups, those who were in and those who were out. Always there was the need to keep pulling that group back in. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 91)

The principal stated that "communication is critical" and that lack of "communication is why people feel left out of the loop" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 173). She further stated that the ESP "kept throwing out [communication] lines" attempting to bring the others in but

regardless of what they tried, they just never did do a good job with the keeping and sharing of ESP minutes (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 163; League Report-4, 2/7/95)).

The ESP team had come to the realization the previous year how critical it was for the faculty to attend the League staff development meetings. They urged people to take advantage of the opportunity to go and hear what other schools were doing:

We had so much trouble getting people to go.

When you ask and ask and ask and they... the same ones of us who had gotten so involved and enjoyed it. We enjoyed going off and we couldn't even convince them that... just going off and ... going to Outback and eating was just the greatest. Just that difference in atmosphere of going off with your colleagues... It's like I'm going to complain, but I'm not going to go even if you open it up.* (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 97)

Through the conferences at League meetings, the ESP team had been told that change was not easy and that things would not always go smoothly. One of the original ESP members stated that the third year was extremely frictional:

We could see where we wanted to go, but there was so much stuff in between here and there that it was kind of like, we want to quit...

There were no other schools who had been through that process so you had nobody to ask. What do you do? What's happening? (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 113)

The same member said that if the principal had not been there to give them a "boost" when they needed it, "We would have just thrown our hands up and it would have died" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 121). The principal asked us to reflect back and look at what we had accomplished. We realized we had made some progress and decided to stick it out another year. "It began to get better that fourth year" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 121).

The Fourth Year: 1993-94

The fourth year of shared governance was a traumatic one for Optima. The faculty was told that the curriculum director for Creek County was retiring and that their principal would be assuming that position in January of 1994 (Field Notes, 3/29/94, P. 1, Lines 3-4). The faculty and staff at Optima "didn't want her to leave" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 417). The faculty and staff were very loyal to the principal (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96) and they were also very anxious about whether the next principal would allow the shared governance to continue (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96). A teacher expressed, "One of our

biggest concerns... one of the main things we were worried about... was will she [the new principal] continue with PSI" [League] (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96, Text unit 104).

In reflection, the teachers were very proud of how they handled the partial year when the principal was only at the school in the afternoons:

We were without a principal for part of the year... If we didn't have self-governance, it would have been a lot harder... If you had something that you needed to do you went to two or three folks... It was sort of like everything was done by committee, but things were done and the kids learned. (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96, Text unit 88 & 94)

According to another teacher in the group:

We had faculty meetings. People got along, things were accomplished and in fact I think jokingly some of us told the county office that we could run ourselves. (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96, Text unit 98)

The teachers thought that overall they had done a good job administering themselves and that schools without shared governance would probably have been chaotic (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96).

The principal had been devoted to Optima and the decision to leave was a difficult one (Field Notes, 3/29/94,

P. 1, Lines 3-4). The principal reflected on that decision by stating:

There were a number of reasons for leaving, but one of them was I really, sincerely felt I had provided all the leadership I could provide. We were standing still again and I didn't know what else I could do to try and rally the troops and get them going. When I left, I knew that I needed a change, but I really, sincerely felt that that school needed a change as badly as I did.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 195)

Perseverance: 1994-1996

A New Principal

Choosing a new principal for Optima was a task which was taken very seriously by the central office administrators (Field Notes, 3/29/94, P. 1, Lines 5-6). The former principal worked closely with the central office in choosing the appropriate successor who would embrace the leadership of the teachers already established at Optima (Personal Communication with Q, April, 1994).

The person chosen for the position was a female administrator in the local school system. She had little knowledge of how the League or shared governance operated but was willing to learn. One teacher commented, "When [current principal] came in she was not familiar with the

League but she jumped right in there and found out" (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 101). The current principal attended the fall conference in 1994 in order to increase her understanding of how the League worked and how decisions were made at Optima (Personal Communication with AA, March 6, 1995); Field Notes, 10/3/95, P. 1, Lines 27-28).

The current principal made a few blunders before she got accustomed to Optima's decision-making process (League Report-4, 2/7/95). At the beginning of her first year at Optima, she made the decision to implement a "We Deliver" program at the school without going through the ESP team (Field Notes, 10/3/95, P. 1, Lines 24-27). The teachers graciously accepted the decision and implemented the program. Later they addressed the issue and explained how decisions were made at Optima. The current principal also learned that the "We Deliver" program was one that the former principal had approached the teachers about a few years ago but they had rejected it (Personal Communication with AA, 3/6/95).

The faculty and staff at Optima have been very pleased with the current principal's leadership and how she continued the shared governance practices already in place (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96; Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96). The current principal has revitalized LSAC, instigated an increase in the amount of parent involvement

in instructional issues as well as in school activities, and continues to keep the ESP team focused on instruction (ESP Minutes, March 6, 1995).

The current principal aspired to make parents a vital part of Optima. She has successfully involved them in school projects such as landscaping the grounds, additions made to the outdoor classroom, redecorating the media center, etc. One parent stated:

[Current principal] is a great principal. She doesn't mind parents voicing their ideas and will also seek out our opinions... Needless to say, you're going to get all the parental support you want when you've treated parents as if they are an important part of the school. (Interview with Z, 3/5/96, Text unit 29).

The former principal had let the LSAC committee dwindle and had used her PTA instead of LSAC (Interview with Q, 3/5/96). The current principal roused the committee and used it to address her concerns about the lack of the arts and art appreciation available in the school (ESP Minutes, March 5, 1995). One parent said that LSAC had addressed the problem by establishing an Arts Council which would be instrumental in addressing the deficiency in arts (Interview with Z, 3/5/96; ESP Minutes, March 5, 1995). LSAC looks for ways to provide the school with things the Board cannot provide:

The committee has been instrumental in bringing parents and teachers together to discuss what the school needs to make it better and how to get it. We work closely with the teachers and try to get them what they need... We're trying to provide things we feel our children miss out on because of where we live.... (Interview with Z, 3/5/96, Text units 11 & 21)

With the new principal, the ESP team has continued to refine its operations as necessary and has continued its move to dealing with only instructional issues. The ESP team is very proud of its new Continuous Improvement Form which they adopted (ESP Minutes, January 8, 1996) to help people distinguish whether the issue they were concerned about should go before the ESP team [directly deals with instruction] or be addressed by administration:

This form has been developed since [current principal] came here. We had a concern about things coming up in our meetings that we didn't need to worry about... We just got together and decided how to fix it and the form came out of that. It's worked really good. (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 189)

The general consensus among the faculty and staff of Optima is that they have come full circle. They have had their ups and downs, their valleys and their peaks; yet,

they continue to forge ahead. The ESP team has increasingly tried to keep its focus on instructional concerns (ESP Minutes, September 20, 1993; League Report-5, 2/6/96). One of the original ESP members stated:

We have finally been around the circle until now when we get together we discuss curriculum and all the other mess doesn't matter. It has taken a long time to not worry about the lunchroom duty, the bus duty,... and things like that... to just be concerned about curriculum and the teaching of children... That didn't happen in a year or two. It's taken a long time to get past it.

(Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text units 183 & 187)

Another teacher reinforced the shift to instructional issues:

The decision making has changed from quit worrying about the janitor's schedule and the lunchroom ladies... lots of little things like that to curriculum issues, instructional issues... Now everything else is out of the way and we can focus on instruction. (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 95)

Ingredient: The Principal

The former principal at Optima came to the school with her own personal vision and what she wanted to accomplish at

the school. As she led Optima toward capturing her vision, the vision continued to grow and evolve (Interview with Q, 3/5/96). The principal reflected on her purpose for getting involved with the League of Professional Schools:

I had some personal vision... that we were developing and building a group that could really make some strides instructionally... But part of that evolved even with me. I think I had the vision but I don't think that I could have verbalized [it] at that time. I just knew that there was something else out there and we weren't getting there.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 51)

The principal's vision was the beginning for Optima and the new path it would take. The curriculum director stated that the principal "had a vision" and that through this vision "the teachers learned how to work together and toward a common purpose" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text units 210 & 254). According to the curriculum director, the teachers were "inspired to see the possibilities" of things that could be accomplished by working together (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 262).

In reflection, the curriculum director felt Optima had shifted "from zero to ten" as a result of the changes encouraged during the former principal's leadership (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 298). One of the

changes experienced was the alteration of the principal's leadership style. The principal's role moved from "traditional to more of a cooperative venture" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 318).

The principal acknowledged that prior to shared governance, she had managed the school in the traditional "boss" manner. She remarked:

I always thought of myself as pretty autocratic. I knew I operated, as much as anything, from intuition... A lot of what I did, I did because in my gut I knew it would work.... (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 103)

"Even though teachers had often made suggestions and helped to solve problems, the Principal had always made the final decisions" (NOVA, 1993, Text unit 46). Prior to shared governance, the principal typically stopped various teachers in the hall and asked their opinion about issues she was considering and then made the decision. One teacher commented:

Prior to shared governance [the principal's attitude was] This is what you are going to do, this is the way we are going to do Fall Festival, this is the way we're going to do whatever. Of course input was there by individuals, like, if you were walking by and she'd gotten a brochure

on something, she'd ask what do you think about this. Just kind of a straw poll. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 155)

Another teacher commented:

Occasionally someone may ask you how you felt about something and they could listen or not. It made no difference. I mean basically it was top-down. [The principal] didn't delegate. She was in control. (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 133)

A teacher who is no longer at the school remembers the staff being able to talk to the principal about most anything. The teacher stated, "She [principal] may not agree and may still do what she wanted, but at least she was willing to listen" (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 268).

The shift in operating from an autocratic leader to a democratic leader was difficult for the principal and she voiced this difficulty often. In April, 1992 at a meeting of administrators from the local Regional Education Services Agency area, the principal related her experiences with shared governance. At that meeting she commented, "Those of you who know me understand how difficult it has been for me to give up some of my power and learn how to delegate" (Personal communication, April, 1992).

The teachers at Optima also recognized that the move to democracy was not easy for the principal and were especially

grateful for the effort she made. A teacher commented, "Well, looking at [principal's name], it was hard for her to cut the apron strings loose" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 143). Another teacher confirmed this by stating, "She [the principal] had a hard time turning the power loose and I think that she will tell you that" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 133).

One teacher viewed the principal as having made a transition in attitude from one of "I'm running the show to [now] I don't have to run the show" (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text unit 81). In one of the groups interviewed, a teacher said that since the principal has shared her power with teachers a "bond of mutual respect" has developed (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 105). Also, "we [the teachers] are treated like professionals and our opinion matters" (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 105).

League work changed the principal's perception of her role in the school to one of "making people think about things and then letting them try to find the solution" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 228). She attributes her ability to lead her staff through major changes she instigated to her attitude of working beside the teachers. The principal stated:

If I asked them to do it, I did it with them.

If we were going to dig a hole, we all dug a

hole. If we were going to have a barbecue, we all had a barbecue. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 143)

Ingredient: School Climate

The principal chosen for Optima in 1981 was not a member of the Optima community. She was from the county seat of LaMont and viewed as an outsider by the Optima community. The principal realized that upon her acceptance of the position that she needed to make herself a part of the Optima community even though she resided in LaMont. The principal "consciously" began turning the focus of the community from the high school (which had been consolidated into LaMont) to the new elementary school (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 217). The principal reflected on a particular teacher from the Optima community who had been very helpful in helping her understand the Optima community:

She was the kind that could... help me understand the community when I first went down there and that was important because I wasn't from there. I was from [county seat]. I was from across the river. They didn't want me anyway... when I say that, they did but that's another story. They had to learn to trust me. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 189)

The principal seized the opportunity to use the Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC), which had been mandated from the central office in the mid 1980s, to create a school where people would want to send their children. At one point the county redrew the bus lines and the principal got a combination of LSAC and PTO parents together. The principal recalls saying to the group, "We're going to do something that will cause people to say I hope I'm in that bus line. I hope I get to go there" (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 13).

One of the things the principal did to shift the focus toward Optima was to create and attach a symbol of meaning to Optima Elementary. The school adopted the symbol of children holding hands with the logo "Touching Tomorrow" as their emblem. The principal commented:

One of the things we set out to do was that when people saw Optima Elementary that there would be a signal, a sign, a topic, a something that came [to mind]... We put it on cups, we put it on everything we could put it on. I had people that would bring me things and say "This just reminded me of y'all's little logo."
(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 217)

The curriculum director acknowledges the principal created an atmosphere at the school which inspired loyalty and pride. The curriculum director felt like over the years

that she had been in the central office, she had had adequate opportunity to observe school leaders and determine what kind of atmosphere they had created at their schools.

Concerning Optima's climate, the curriculum director stated:

I think it's been created. When you've seen as many uncreative leaders as I have, you can see the results of a leader who has created it [good climate]. (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 558)

She commented further, "... There could be pride in all of the schools to equal that [Optima's climate] if it were generated" (Interview with Y, 2/29/96), Test unit 278).

A sense of family and pride has been established at Optima which extends to the children and their parents (Field Notes, 3/5/96, P. 5, Lines 15-16 & 4/29/96, P. 5, Line 38). One parent commented:

They [the faculty] care about the children they teach and want to do the best job possible. They're sincere about doing a good job and about making the school the best that it can be. There is a lot of pride in the community and school. There is a communication and a willingness to work together. The openness and family type atmosphere at Optima is probably why it has been so successful. (Interview with Z, 3/5/96, Text unit 39)

A person from the community who is a local person and has been very involved in building the outdoor classroom stated:

The school is the best school we've got in the county, baring none, even the high school. There is more individual instruction... The atmosphere is great. You couldn't ask for anything better. (Interview with P, 4/29/96, Text unit 22)

A teacher who no longer works at the school remarked:

I had two children who were there [at Optima] and they felt pretty special... One of my daughters is still mad at me because I came over here and I haven't gone back to Optima yet. (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 145)

Optima's reputation for quality, genuinely caring about the children, willingness to try innovations, and ability to include parents in the school program has permeated into the surrounding communities. Many parents who do not live in the bus line transport their children to the school and some even cross county lines to expose their children to the Optima experience. A parent commented on her decision to transport her children by stating:

Well, this [a previous school] wasn't the atmosphere I wanted for my children so [we] decided that it would be worth driving them.

to Optima each day. We have been happy with that decision and our boys have too. It is like one big family at Optima and the children feel it too. My boys feel like they are cared for there, and it makes school much more pleasant for them and for us too. (Interview with Z, 3/5/96, Text unit 27)

Two teachers who are no longer at Optima expounded upon the school's special atmosphere and the ability of the principal to inspire "total loyalty" from the faculty (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 95). The teachers related how the teachers were "willing to give a hundred and fifty percent" and how you could find teachers at the school late most days and even on Saturdays (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 123). The teachers told about a custodian who made a special effort to look after the school, its grounds, and the staff. They stated:

He was there day and night looking after it. If you were there working at night, he was out there to make sure that you were safe, and he would come checking in and out on you and it was just different. (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 129)

The current faculty members interviewed conveyed a great sense of pride in the school and commented extensively on the professional atmosphere at Optima. Comments made by

teachers included, "We are treated like professionals and our opinion matters," (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 105); "We've moved from a sense of isolation to working and depending on each other," (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text unit 85); "The atmosphere to work here is better. Your opinion is valued. You have the right to disagree," (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 193).

One teacher summarized the prevailing attitude at Optima by making the remark, "You may be doing a very good job, but you aren't doing your best unless you're growing. You always have to have room for improvement" (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96, Text unit 138). Another teacher deduced that the Optima community and its surrounding communities covet Optima and what it has to offer students, parents, and teachers (Field Notes, 1/8/96, P. 3, Line 44). She stated, "It is a school evidently that others see what we have and want to be a part of it" (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96, Text unit 176).

Ingredient: The Optima Community

The Optima community has always had a reputation for being a caring community whose people were active in the school, the church, and other social activities (NOVA, 1993). A paraprofessional who was not raised in the south described Optima as a place where "everybody knows everybody... not only that but they care about them"

(Interview with S, 4/17/96, Text unit 330). The paraprofessional felt that both personal and religious values in this community are different than the other places she has lived (Interview with S, 4/17/96). The paraprofessional explained by stating:

It is different here. It's just a lot slower pace... Their values are so different here. Everybody just pulls together and helps everybody else... God is in everything here and I like that.... (Interview with S, 4/17/96, Text units 330 & 334).

The paraprofessional's impression of Optima is one that is supported by other locals too. The Optima community is described as a "very tight knit, close community... that is very supportive of the school" (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text unit 89). The community, like the school, considers itself "a big family" (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 121). One parent compared the family feeling to having siblings:

We may fight among us but we won't have someone else fighting against our people. It is kind of like family... My brother and I may fight, but nobody else fights my brother. (Interview with P, 4/29/96, Text unit 80)

In 1980, when Creek County tried to consolidate all of its schools into the county seat the "tightness" of the

Optima community was a predominate reason the elementary school was left in Optima. Years earlier the smaller country schools in the county had been closed and the students moved into Optima and LaMont. Those small areas of Creek County without a school "literally died" and now the citizens could see it all happening again (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 225). Optima's elementary school was allowed to remain in the community and the citizens focused their attention on the new school.

The parents and citizens of Optima participated in the elementary school by primarily getting involved in the Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC) and the local PTO. The citizens and parents worked cooperatively to build a nature trail, an amphitheater, an outdoor classroom for the school and they did a tremendous amount of landscaping to enhance the beauty of the grounds (Interview with P, 4/29/96; Interview with W, 2/6/96). Also, they jointly raised capital for additional needs of the school that the Board cannot provide and they speak at Board meetings supporting the extra things that Optima wants for its children. One parent stated, "The committee works to help Optima get the things they need and [we] stand up on their behalf at any Board meetings on issues that may concern Optima" (Interview with Z, 3/5/96, Text unit 5). One of the teachers commented:

You can pick up the telephone and call anybody in town and if they can't do it for you, they'll find somebody who can... It's a community school, definitely. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 227)

The teachers at Optima feel that shared governance has played a large role in the amount of parent involvement. Several commented that shared governance opened up communication between parents and teachers, that the parents feel more open to express their ideas and that they feel more welcome at the school (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96). One teacher stated, "... I feel that our shared governance plays a big role in the way LSAC addresses projects and things that we want to do for the school" (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96, Text unit 162). There is a very cooperative atmosphere at the school between parents and teachers (League Report-4, 2/7/95; Field Notes, 2/6/96, P. 4, Lines, 35-36).

The principal is credited with turning the community's focus to the new elementary school and making it a place of pride. Optima has always been a "tight" community and the new principal from "outside" was looked upon with trepidation. One teacher originally from Optima reflected:

They really wanted a home town person, but they all grew to love her [the principal] and respect her. The community worked well with her and she

was loyal to them too. (Interview with U-V,
2/21/96, Text unit 101)

The accomplishments of this leader in this particular community were something to be proud of. The curriculum director acknowledged that the Optima community is special but gave credit to the principal for maximizing the community's attributes. She remarked:

That climate in that community has been there for years and years and years. This didn't happen until they had a different type of leader in that school. They've always had pride, but yet now they have pride and accomplishments. In the past, they had plenty of pride, but the accomplishments weren't there. The level of accomplishment was not there. That's the difference. (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text units 583 & 587)

Ingredient: Communication

Communication among the members of an organization is very important and among members of a group attempting to implement shared governance good communication is essential. It was essential that the members of Optima Elementary understand how the shared governance system operated between the principal and the faculty and how the faculty operated within the different teams. The principal reflected on communication's importance by stating:

I think it [communication] is critical. It is critical within the team that they understand how they operate within the team and how the team operates within the total school. Even though that may be clear when you start, it gets bogged down and people begin to feel like...

It doesn't matter what I say, they [ESP Team] will do what they want. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 177)

As part of its League Charter, Optima established a system of communication between all members of the faculty, the leadership team [ESP], and the principal (Interview with T, 2/6/96; Interview with W, 2/6/96). The communication system established was one where the members of the faculty gave input to their team leader, the leader took the information to the ESP meetings, and then each leader carried what happened at the ESP meeting back to the members of their own team (League Report-2, 3/17/91). Also, minutes were taken at the ESP meeting and were to be shared with the faculty so everyone would be well-informed (League Report-2, 3/17/91).

Although established with the best of intentions, the system of communication established at Optima had problems. According to the principal, the sharing of minutes was one of the major problems:

We never did a good job of that. Minutes would be taken, then they might be written, but getting them in the mailboxes was never a good, successful kind of thing. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 163)

The principal felt that some grade level groups got "disgruntled early" because they were not kept well-informed (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 175). She stated:

There is nothing teachers hate worse than to hear [something] from somebody else when they think they should have heard it from a certain source. If [the] principal is the source of information, then that is fine and good, but in League work... I wasn't the source, the committee [or] the ESP was the source.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 173)

In League work, the leadership team was the source of information. If a team leader did not take the job seriously and did not take the information back to the grade group, then a communication problem developed in that grade (Interview with Q, 3/5/96).

Optima's ESP Team tried various techniques to correct communication problems and to ensure that all members of the faculty were well-informed (League Report-3, 2/3/92). The principal reflected on some of the things they tried:

We tried to go from that chairman, with the secretary being the instrumental part, we tried doing minutes,... going back to your group and tell them... we called them together in a faculty meeting and shared what the ESP had done. One time we met after school and said all y'all need to come.

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 165)

A communication tool that Optima started in 1992 and still uses today is called "Round Table" (League Report-3, 2/3/92; Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 95). Round table was instituted by the principal to give all members of the staff the opportunity to express their viewpoint on issues within the school. During post-planning each year, the faculty comes together to discuss the various activities held during the year (Field Notes, 6/6/95, P. 3, Lines 20-22; & 6/4/96, P. 6, Lines 16-17). They voice their opinions on which activities to keep, which ones need improvements, and which ones they do not want to do anymore (Field Notes, 6/6/95, P. 6, Lines 26-27). One teacher relatively new to Optima stated:

A lot of things that [we were] doing were things that they had decided before I had been here. So I didn't really have any say so. Then at Round Table I could say, yes I like that or

no I don't. (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96,
Text unit 164)

A major communication problem for Optima was the lack of understanding among the faculty members about the League's purpose, how it functioned in the school, and how the decision-making process operated. The two teams which were established at the beginning of League work confused the majority of the faculty (League Report-2, 4/25/91). They were overwhelmed with trying to understand how the process worked. Decisions were being made on the PSI Task Force; therefore, the faculty was left out of the loop and did not feel informed (League Report-2, 4/25/91). In reflection, one of the original members remarked about how things should have been done differently:

I would have made sure that everybody was aware.
That is my big thing. I think that if we had
backed up and did that back then-- You can't
get everybody involved, but you can at least
make them aware. (Interview with X, 2/7/96,
Text unit 234)

One teacher expressed that she felt the need to "saturate people" with information about the League and how it operates in Optima "before they actually even become employed" (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 51). The teachers made a concerted effort to make sure new employees understood what was going on relative to the

League (Field Notes, 11/6/95, P. 3, Lines 32-35). Also, a new employee was sent to a League meeting as soon as possible (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96). Two of the original ESP members created a booklet for all new employees which explained about the League and described how it operated at Optima (Interview with X, 2/7/96). One of the teachers that helped create the booklet remarked:

You have transitional type changes and before you know it you're going to have a faculty that doesn't know what is going on again... We tried to fix it so that we could say... This stuff [will] give you an idea of what PSI is all about, what ESP is all about and if you don't take time to read it, then we did our part... If you have questions, come, come, come. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 236).

Various people felt like communication about League activities would have been better if the ESP minutes had been given out consistently. One teacher stated:

Make sure that your minutes are always there and to me that is probably where we went lacking. Sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't. The whole school as a faculty needs all the minutes... If they're not there and they don't get at least the minutes in their

box... If they look over them, they have an idea of what was discussed. (Interview with X, 2/7/96, Text unit 187)

The principal corroborated the assessment of the minutes' importance by saying:

If I had it to do over again, I'd spend a lot more time with it [communication]... If nothing else, with minutes. With making sure everybody knew when we met, how we met and what was decided. The communication is why people feel left out of that loop. (Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 173)

As a result of League activities, communication among the teachers at Optima has opened up. The teachers feel much more open to voice their opinions to their peers and to administration (Field Notes, 3/6/95, P. 3, Lines 2-7). One teacher commented, "It's real hard for me when I have to deal with other principals... I'm used to being able to walk in and say 'Have you thought about this'" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 197). This type of open communication is enjoyed among the teachers too. One teacher talked about how materials were viewed as "mine" and how teachers did not share them with each other (Interview with W, 2/6/96). With participation in shared governance, the attitude of helping each other has changed (Field Notes, 2/6/96, P. 4, Lines 26-29). The teacher explained:

The communication has opened up. Now I feel comfortable going all the way down the front hall, any teacher there, saying "I need to borrow so and so. [And the response is] Sure."

(Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 193)

Teacher discussions in the lounge has also taken on a different context since the teachers started working closer together and collaborating among the grades. Lounge talk has moved from "ain't he a bad youngun', I wish he wasn't in my room" to "I've tried this with him and I've tried this with him... Do you know of anything else I can try?"

(Interview with Q, 3/5/96, Text unit 193). A teacher commented that instead of talking about how bad this child is, now teachers go and ask the previous teacher what worked best with this particular child (Interview with W, 2/6/96). The collegiality and collaboration among the teachers has increased dramatically since they joined the League (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96; Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96).

Ingredient: Teacher Empowerment

The transition from principal-centered leadership to teacher-centered leadership has been a long, difficult process for Optima. The teachers had a very hard time accepting the idea that the principal was going to share her power with them and that the teachers would actually make

some of the decisions for the school (Interview with T, 2/6/96). One teacher remarked, "It is beyond teachers' comprehension that they can have the power to make decisions and the principal won't have veto power over it" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 165). The idea of sharing decision-making with the principal is beyond a teacher's comfort level and in the beginning "they just don't trust the administrator" (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 165).

Generally, teachers are unprepared for the role as a decision maker. A teacher shared her thoughts about getting involved in the process:

It was intimidating for somebody to ask you what did you think... We almost resented having to get involved because we weren't used to that. We were used to sitting back and somebody saying you need to do this and this. (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text unit 37)

Another teacher shared her perceptions on why teachers have a difficult time making the transition and becoming empowered:

I don't think teachers have been given the power and therefore they don't know what to do with it. How to react to being able to make those decisions and how to feel good and be comfortable with the decisions they make. They need to be

taught that and it takes a long time to learn it.

(Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 161)

According to the curriculum director, the transition is difficult because teachers "don't see the whole picture"

(Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 396). They "see their narrow, little tunnel..." and "they see it from their perspective" (Interview with Y, 4/29/96, Text unit 388). To be effective in decision-making, teachers need to see beyond their classroom and they need to have the knowledge to make good decisions (Interview with Y, 2/29/96).

At Optima, the principal observed "teachers who had been exposed to innovative and nontraditional ideas were more receptive and willing to participate in the decision-making process" (NOVA, 1993, Text unit 31).

The teachers at Optima have progressed through several different stages as they have become an empowered staff. One teacher recalled some of those stages:

We had to get past the idea that we couldn't meet without the principal there or that we would have to change the meeting time. We even went through a time when we wouldn't disagree with anything the principal wanted. You find yourself afraid to disagree. It goes back to the way teachers are educated... They don't want to disappoint you [the principal]

and its just a vicious circle. (Interview with T, 2/6/96, Text unit 167)

Shared governance has made a "tremendous difference" in the level of satisfaction among teachers with decisions made at Optima (Interview with Group G-K, 1/15/96, Text unit 96; Field Notes, 1/8/96, P. 3, Lines 41-43). One teacher commented, "I think you're probably just more satisfied with the decision that you helped make even if the same decision might have been handed to you" (Interview with Group L-O, 1/8/96, Text unit 106). "There is a difference in the level of responsibility and a willingness to accept decisions made... You don't have anybody to blame" (Interview with R, 2/7/96, Text units 77 & 85). Another teacher compared Optima to a business by stating;

If you are given profit sharing in a business, you're going to take better care of your business. Our school... It's our responsibility. We're sharing in the so called profit... We feel that we have a direct responsibility, not only to ourselves but to our school. (Interview with G-K, 1/10/96, Text units 78 & 80)

As teachers became more empowered and the level of responsibility increased, their sense of individual and group power was elevated significantly (Field Notes, 1/9/96, P. 4, Lines 6-8). The teachers felt the freedom to be real honest and say what they believe instead of what the

principal wanted to hear (Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96).

One teacher commented on this shift in attitude:

I think that there may be some things that [the principal] may feel strong about, but if she doesn't have the vote of the faculty, she is going to leave it alone... We all know that and it is a good feeling... It is a powerful feeling. There is a definite shift and I think it helps bond mutual respect. We are treated like professionals and our opinion matters.

(Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 105)

This sense of power elevated to the point that the teachers questioned mandates from the central office and typically would ask, "Well, why can't we do this?"

(Interview with Group A-F, 1/9/96, Text unit 81). One teacher recalls that after three or four years of shared governance:

We were ready to buck the system. That's not the way we work. You don't tell us what we're going to do. We make our decisions now. So it kind of got sticky. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 139)

Optima had to acknowledge that there were administrative decisions that would come down from the central office and that they were expected to follow them. The central office has maintained that certain issues such as the hiring of

personnel is an administrative task and not part of the shared governance process (Interview with W, 2/6/96).

The teachers at Optima had to learn how to disagree amicably with each other. Teachers did not "grow" at the same rate or as one teacher said "make a connection at the same time" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 119). For example, there were those who thought that fixing discipline was the answer to all their woes and others who stressed that if those having discipline problems would alter their teaching methods then the other would "weed itself out" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 119). In conflict resolution training teachers learned how to view their differences in a different way:

We learned that just because we disagree, it doesn't mean that we disagree with the person. We just disagree with the idea. It was painful. Growing pains were awful here. (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 119)

Optima does not look at conflict in the same manner as before. Now the teachers look at it as an opportunity to express their opinions and grow professionally (Interview with X, 2/7/96). One person acknowledged the many different personality types in the school and that it was hard not to take things personally but he stressed, "You just have to keep your negative fires put out and the others burning, add

some fuel to those and keep going" (Interview with W, 2/6/96, Text unit 244).

Summary

The story of Optima Elementary is a practice-based example of how one school altered its structure and implemented site-based management. This narrative described in vivid detail, through the recollections of the actual participants, the processes associated with implementing a major change such as shared governance. The data collected on the events and the roles of the participants were collected during observations, individual and group interviews, and an analysis of historical documents. In the narrative, the events of the story were relayed chronologically and were then followed by the essential elements of the change effort at Optima. These essential elements: principal, school climate, communication, parent and community support, and empowerment were depicted as the data was presented in this research study.

Optima Elementary joined the League of Professional Schools in 1990. A leadership team was established and the teachers shared responsibility for decision making with the principal. Through the hard work of Optima's faculty and staff, the organizational structure of the school was altered. The teachers became empowered through shared decision-making and worked collaboratively to make

improvements at Optima. The change process at Optima was complex; it extended over a seven year period and is, of course, ongoing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was an ethnohistorical case study of Optima Elementary in rural, Southeast Georgia. The study examined the implementation process of site-based management at Optima over a bounded (Stake, 1988) seven year period from 1989-1996. Qualitative research techniques were utilized to describe the planning and implementation process of shared governance and the internal and external factors which contributed to the changes in organizational structure at Optima. Qualitative techniques allowed the researcher to view the whole process and the meaning attached to the events as depicted by the actual participants.

Sources of data collection for the study consisted of interviews, written documents from Optima, and documents from the League of Professional Schools. The primary source of data collection consisted of both individual and group interviews. The group interviews were conducted in an unstructured format with the persons interjecting their recollections and comments as desired. The group interviews provided the researcher with valuable insight into issues which needed to be addressed during individual interviews. The individual interviews were conducted in a semistructured

format with each person answering the same questions. The semistructured format allowed the researcher flexibility to develop and expand on the participants' responses so valuable information could be collected as it surfaced in the session.

Respondents were chosen based on their involvement in the shared governance process since its inception. In order to provide a broad view of the process and changes at Optima, respondents consisted of administrators from the school, central office personnel, teachers and paraprofessionals who had served on Optima's leadership team, teachers who were present during the implementation of shared governance but are no longer at the school, and parent and community leaders who have been heavily involved at Optima.

Optima had the necessary elements for significant changes to become a reality. The nudge for improvement from the central office combined with the leader, her vision and the climate she had established at Optima served as essential elements for change. The established culture of the Optima community, along with the principal's deliberate attempt to transfer the community's loyalty from the high school to Optima, provided a supporting foundation for Optima's new endeavors.

The positive change factors present at Optima were further enhanced by its involvement in the League of

Professional Schools. The League's staff development was crucial in providing the glue which held Optima together as it made the transition from a traditional style of management to a participatory style of management. The road to change was rocky. However, the opportunity for schools to share their trials and triumphs with each other at League meetings helped Optima understand they were normal. The trials and triumphs were simply part of the process.

Discussion of Findings

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) states that a transformational leader engages the members of an organization so that the leader and follower are raised to a higher level of motivation and morality. Also, that the leader inspires the members to work toward a common purpose and tries to satisfy the wants and needs of the members. The principal at Optima was a transformational leader. She had a vision of building and developing a group of teachers who could create a strong, instructionally sound school. In order to achieve this, she inspired the faculty and staff to a higher and common purpose. The principal created the conditions under which the faculty and staff could accomplish true educational improvement (Lieberman & Miller, 1990).

The principal at Optima had traditionally operated as an autocratic leader. To move the school into shared

governance, she had to work collaboratively with her staff and learn how to lead from the center instead of the front (Fullan, 1991). The principal at Optima learned how to facilitate change instead of dictating it (Conley, 1994). Follett (1941) emphasized that leaders needed to share authority and make workers feel that they work with the leader instead of under him/her. The principal at Optima made the faculty and staff feel that they were equal in their power to create change and that the principal worked beside them instead of in front of them. As one teacher at Optima said, "the principal is in charge but she is not overriding. She is just like us" (Interview with Group G-K, 1/10/96, Text unit 102).

The principal's leadership skills in participatory management evolved over time along with the SBM process. She did not have a well-defined route for the school to follow. She lead the faculty one step at a time and solved issues as they evolved. The road to change was murky and unsure. It was a journey into the unknown (Fullan, 1994). Leaders of change need to be able to acknowledge that they do not have all the answers, can develop solutions as they go, and stay with reform until something meaningful is accomplished (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Teacher Empowerment

The move from working in isolation in the classroom to working collaboratively was not an easy transition for the teachers at Optima. They were distrustful of the principal's intention and did not have any experience in viewing things from a broad perspective. As Conley (1994) stated, teachers can be expected to be uncomfortable with the broad perspective and must adjust to the complexity of the change in role. David (1989) adds that teachers have to shift their perspective from the single classroom to the school as a whole.

As teachers at Optima participated in the decision-making process, they became empowered. They became comfortable with the process over time and enjoyed the sense of power they felt at having a voice in decisions made for the school. Barth (1988) stresses that the involvement of teachers in decision-making is a slow process but the benefits far outweigh the negative aspects.

In the beginning, teachers were only interested in housekeeping issues which dealt little with instruction. In the later years, they adjusted their focus to issues which impacted teaching and learning. According to Bjork (1992), if there is a high degree of interest in the issue, there will be a high degree of interest in participating in the decision that affects the issue. The teachers at Optima have evolved with the decision-making process and choose to

participate in issues which they consider relevant to their goals, particularly regarding instructional issues.

The teachers at Optima assumed ownership of the decisions they made and their level of satisfaction with decision-making increased. The teachers felt like the decisions made were theirs. Conley (1994) states that teachers will assume ownership and try to ensure the decisions result in improved learning. David (1989) points out that when teachers are allowed to formulate new ideas and adapt them to their situation, they are more likely to participate and be responsive to change. At Optima, the teachers were innovative in their ideas and committed to the decisions they made. They felt responsible for the outcome. As one teacher at Optima said, "Now it was my job, my committee and I'm going to make sure it works" (Interview with U-V, 2/21/96, Text unit 346).

The shift in role from isolation to one of collaboration and empowerment requires much staff development. Staff development is a crucial element in obtaining site-based management and probably the greatest challenge to achieve (Mentell, 1993). A change such as site-based management typically requires long-range planning in staff development (Wood & Thompson, 1993). The central office provided Optima with staff development on conflict resolution and other instructional initiatives while the principal arranged release time during the school day for

planning and collaboration. Even with the time and resources allocated to the change effort, there was much confusion among Optima's faculty and staff. The teachers going to the League meetings were hearing information on the change process. The other part of the faculty did not have the benefit of hearing about school restructuring and they did not understand what they were attempting to achieve. Conley (1991) states that if the change people are being asked to make is substantive, everyone on the staff needs to be able to actively engage in, as well as understand, the change process. Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992) agree that training for the entire staff involved in restructuring is important so they can assume their new roles and understand what restructuring involves. The amount of pre-implementation training that the majority of the faculty received consisted of the sharing of information and the answering of questions by members of the ESP Team. Simply sharing information and answering questions about shared governance was inadequate to understanding the change process.

The professional development and support of the League was critical to sustaining Optima's journey to shared governance and change. At the League meetings, the teachers were able to discuss their frustrations with other schools and League consultants to understand more about the bewildering process of making changes in the way things

operated at Optima. Through the League meetings, faith was restored that the process could succeed if they sustained their efforts over the long haul. As viewed by Asayesh (1993), staff development is an ongoing process which should begin with intensive training and continue at the site for continuous growth. The follow-up and support provided by the League was invaluable to Optima.

Time

Time is a two-fold concept at Optima Elementary. One aspect of time is the amount of time the faculty and staff gave to the change process. The other aspect of time is related to the length of time (years) that Optima has persevered in their endeavor to implement shared governance.

The faculty and staff at Optima gave an extraordinary amount of personal time to the change process. Teachers were released from teaching duties during the day, they stayed after school, and sometimes they even worked on weekends.

The implementation of shared governance at Optima Elementary was a slow, arduous process. The school began the transition in 1989 and most of their decisions surrounded improving self-esteem in students and housekeeping issues which had little impact on student achievement. The staff was very innovative and many of their programs are still in place, but they did not focus on

improving student achievement (related to test scores) until the 1994-95 school year. The ESP Team now restricts the time it spends on issues to those which directly relate to curriculum and instruction. If an issue does not directly benefit children, they try to route it back to the principal. As described by Fullan (1994), this "top-down bottom-up" relationship has worked well for Optima (p. 38).

It has taken seven years for the faculty and staff to accept that curriculum and instruction is where they need to spend their time and that the rest of the issues are minor in comparison. Major change such as the restructuring of the governance structure takes time and should be seen as a gradual learning process (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). As Fullan (1994) states:

New ideas of any worth to be effective require an in-depth understanding, and the development of skill and commitment to make them work... The only alternative that works is creating conditions that enable and press people to consider personal and shared visions, and skill development through practice over time. (p. 23)

Culture and Climate

The culture of the Optima community is long-standing; tight knit, supportive and caring. The community pulls together on issues about which they are truly concerned.

The former principal at Optima used the established culture of the community to enhance the climate and culture at Optima Elementary. When she became principal, she deliberately sought to pull the community into the school by transferring the community's loyalty from the high school to Optima. The principal illustrated transformational leadership when she established a support base in the community by expressing how Optima cared about children. The principal used the symbol of children holding hands to convey Optima Elementary as a good environment for the community's children. Bolman and Deal (1991) state that humans create symbols to provide direction and communicate the culture of the organization. Through symbols such as Optima's "Touching Tomorrow," meaning was attached to the school.

Prior to the former principal coming to Optima Elementary, there was already a sense of pride in the community, and the citizens were supportive of each other. The principal enhanced the climate at Optima Elementary by encouraging the teachers to take risks in a supportive environment. Fullan and Miles (1992) stress the importance of a climate that encourages risk-taking. "People will not venture into uncertainty unless there is an appreciation that difficulties encountered are a natural part of the process" (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 749).

The principal also created an environment which was rich with teacher collaboration and collegiality, opportunities for teacher growth and a positive attitude toward continuous improvement. According to Rosenholtz (1989), these factors along with a commitment to make things happen signify an environment which is conducive for changes to take place in teaching and learning.

Parental and Community Involvement

Optima Elementary has a strong parent and community support base. Parents flow in and out of the school helping with various projects, volunteering in the classroom, etc. The parents do not play an active role in the ESP Team's decision process, but they do have a voice in issues which concern the school. This arrangement is typical of other schools involved in shared governance. Rarely do schools allow parents equal participation in the governance process (Martin, 1991-92). According to Martin (1991-92), parents and community members usually serve on advisory councils for the school. The parents and community members in the Optima community work in conjunction with faculty to improve conditions at the school and to provide the extras the school needs.

The welcoming attitude toward parent and community participation in the school program has contributed to the acceptance of changes made at Optima. Martin (1992-92)

states that allowing parents to be involved in their child's education increases parent satisfaction and is directly related to student achievement.

Communication

Evans (1993) stresses that communication "is an axiom of organizational change that the larger the innovation, the greater the need for communication" (p. 22). A channel of communication was established at Optima but it did not function properly. The information from the ESP meetings was not disseminated to the rest of the staff in a timely or consistent manner. This poor communication led to confusion and misunderstandings.

Major sources of miscommunication at Optima pertained to who was on the PSI Task Force, the ESP Team, and how the two groups functioned. The communication problems were also related to the need for additional staff development on shared governance and the change process. Teachers need appropriate staff development to be aware of the struggles and challenges that accompany complex change (Ohlhausen, Meyerson, & Sexton, 1992).

Mentell (1993) suggests "it is critical that information reach all levels of the organization to facilitate the involvement of the entire staff" (p. 98). An effective communication system should have information flowing downward, upward, and horizontally (Mentell, 1993).

Since communication was not dependable at Optima, many staff members who were not on the ESP Team did not feel involved in the decision making process. They felt left out of the loop and did not perceive that things were changing as promised (Interview with Q, 3/5/86).

As shared governance has evolved at Optima, communication between teachers, administrators, and parents has opened up. Teachers feel free to communicate with each other and feel comfortable speaking honestly with the principal and parents.

Conclusions

In 1989, Optima Elementary's faculty and staff started making changes in the way they operated through the shared governance process. The principal was a key element in the change process. The principal was a transformational leader who made a leadership style change from an autocratic to a democratic style of management. She had a vision for the school, was able to articulate the vision which her faculty accepted as their own, and created a climate with the necessary conditions to support change.

The shared governance process has been successful within the constraints established by the Creek County Board of Education. The Board has been supportive in working with the school's leadership team while asserting that certain aspects of school management (such as hiring of personnel)

are administrative tasks and not open to shared decision making. Optima has acknowledged these restraints and has learned how to work with the central office administrators so that they make the decisions for their children regarding teaching and learning.

Through the shared governance process, the teachers and other staff members make decisions in collaboration with the principal. Collegial relationships are prevalent and the teachers work collaboratively with each other and with the principal. Over the years, the staff has become comfortable communicating openly with each other and expressing ideas honestly with the principal and parents. There is a strong commitment to the school and its improvement. The faculty has accepted the premise that they, as well as the students, have become life long learners.

Until the 1994-95 school year, Optima's ESP Team primarily worked on housekeeping issues, student self-esteem, and the implementation of innovative ideas and programs. In the fall of 1994, Optima made a concerted effort for the ESP Team to deal only with curriculum and instruction. For the past two years, the ESP Team has focused on improving student achievement by working to improve curriculum and instruction. It took approximately five years for the majority of Optima's staff to move beyond working on issues which have little impact on student learning to those that have a significant impact.

The implementation of SBM at Optima was hampered by two areas: communication and staff development. Inadequate staff development at the beginning of the change process led to much confusion about the League and shared decision-making. The faculty voted to join the League even though they did not completely understand its entire concept. Information dissemination was also a problem. Information did not flow from the ESP Team meetings adequately nor on a consistent basis and this created a sense of distrust. The faculty did not feel like things were changing at all for the first couple of years.

The third year at Optima was voiced by many as the "slump." This part of the implementation process was actually the "performance dip" (Eastwood & Louis, 1992, p. 214-215). Optima's principal understood that this was a normal part of the process. With the principal's leadership and coping skills, she moderated the impact of this dip. Optima continued on to a higher level of performance instead of reverting back to their old practices.

Optima's experiences with shared decision-making support the view in the literature that change is an ongoing process that never ends. Optima's story verifies that school improvement is not a goal to be achieved but is a process that requires continuous work and refinement. Fullan (1991) refers to the change process as a journey that is "exceedingly complex" (p. 41). Optima supports that idea

with the peaks and valleys they have encountered. Some years were better than others.

The climate that the former principal had created upon her arrival at the school and the continued support from the League of Professional Schools were two important factors to Optima sustaining its journey. Without the family-like atmosphere created at Optima, the misunderstandings during the first two years of shared governance could have been disastrous. The ESP Team got through those difficult times by listening to the other faculty members, addressing their concerns, and having a strong climate to sustain them. Attending the League meetings three times a year gave them the sustenance they needed to keep going. To sustain a change effort such as Optima's, ongoing staff development is necessary to keep the momentum going. Without the League providing that support, Optima may have faltered.

Researcher's Personal Reflections

Optima Elementary was an example of what could be accomplished in schools when led by a leader with transformational leadership skills (taken from researcher's field notes). The former principal at Optima exposed her faculty and staff to a new idea of school management long before other schools in the rural, southeast area considered the prospect. This principal should be extremely proud of what she accomplished at Optima. She and the teachers

evolved together into continuous, ongoing learners. They made a daily practice of thinking, planning, and implementing strategies or programs which benefited their students. Optima should be commended for entering the murky waters of change, virtually alone, and for sustaining the movement through both the good times and the bad.

Implications

The study of Optima Elementary was the study of a single school site and its experiences with shared governance. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other schools attempting to restructure through shared governance but many of the implications of change theory may be applied in other similar situations.

This study contributed to the awareness of the potential of transformational leaders and what they can accomplish in schools. The transformational leader is a strong force in the change process and has the ability to lead others in the school through school reform. The skills associated with this style of leader may guide higher education as it designs the programs that prepare the leaders of tomorrow. Identifying these skills in potential administrators may also be beneficial to those with the responsibility of hiring future school leaders.

There are also implications for higher education concerning the preparation of teachers. As school leaders

increasingly share decision making with teachers, teachers need to be prepared to accept the leadership responsibility in curriculum and instruction. For teachers to be comfortable with this responsibility, teacher preparation programs need to develop skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, group process, and create an understanding of the change process. Universities need to prepare teachers to work collaboratively with other teachers and with administration instead of working in isolation within the classroom.

The study of Optima suggests that if a school has strong leadership, a strong culture, and a sufficiently empowered staff it, may be possible to stay on course even through a change in the leadership of the school. Schools may evolve beyond their dependence on a particular principal. At Optima, these features were in place when the central office hired a strong leader to replace the former principal who had initiated shared governance at the school. The new principal assumed the position and has continued the shared decision-making practices at Optima without digressing.

An implication of this study is for principals to involve their teachers in leadership roles. If given the opportunity, teachers can assume leadership roles and get involved in decision-making for the school. The participation of teachers in decision-making can improve

collaboration between teachers and principals and further the development of instructional practices.

There is a strong implication that both communication and staff development are extremely important aspects of the change process. This study suggests that if adequate readiness through staff development for all those involved in the change process had been completed, many obstacles detailed in the Optima story might not have occurred. Many of the misunderstandings and miscommunications at Optima might have been avoided through staff development during pre-implementation. This study also implies that staff development for schools involved in change is a vital part of a continuous learning process.

Administrators have different leadership styles. Sergiovanni (1990) sees a need for more transformational leaders who can adapt to change and motivate their staffs to higher levels of meaning. Prior to shared governance, the principal at Optima operated most of the time as an autocratic leader. With the knowledge that involving teachers in the decision-making process can improve instruction, the principal attempted to become a democratic leader. This study has implications to other leaders that it may be possible to alter their style of leadership.

Principals may imply that it is possible to create significant changes in a single school without other schools in the system being involved. With the support of the

central office, one school can make a difference for its students.

Time is a factor in change efforts. Administrators getting involved in a major change effort may want to assume they are looking in excess of five years before teaching and learning may be affected. The length of time in a change effort calls for dedication and commitment of the principal before involving a staff. The principal may also want to have a well devised plan for creating and managing time so work on school improvement can be accomplished.

The study of Optima demonstrated change in a real world setting. All educators (higher education, administrators, teachers) can assume that schools attempting to restructure through shared governance may encounter many of the elements that occurred at Optima.

Recommendations

The study of Optima Elementary offers numerous possibilities for further research into schools and the many different ways to approach change. There is a great need for studies with schools that have maintained and continue to evolve with school improvement beyond the five year period. What is unique about schools which sustain the change effort over an extended length of time?

The continued study of Optima may offer insight into why some schools can experience a change in leadership and

still maintain their course of change. Did Optima socialize the new principal into the way things were done at the school, or was the leader chosen for the school unique and well suited to Optima?

Further research is needed on the pre-implementation or planning year at schools which are preparing for site-based management or another type of substantial change. Research into the planning years of schools instituting change may provide others with an outlook on what kind of staff development and communication networks are necessary to avoid the confusion Optima experienced during its beginning years. Is a full year of readiness necessary before embarking on substantial change? What creates readiness for change? What are the key aspects of understanding the change process?

"Teacher growth is closely related to pupil growth" (Barth, 1990, p. 49). Professional growth in teachers is also related to the relationships between faculty and the principal (Barth, 1990). If teacher empowerment fosters positive relationships between the faculty and the principal, then teacher empowerment may also affect pupil growth. Further research is needed to determine what impact teacher empowerment has on the professional growth and maturity of teachers and on student instruction. Does empowerment create a learning environment for both teachers and students?

The study of Optima Elementary was the story of a school that altered its decision-making structure. The events were relayed to the researcher by the actual participants. The participants' stories gave meaning to the events and provided the researcher and readers with a real example of change.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Data Sources

Data Sources

I. List of Interviews

- A. Interview with group A through F, 1/9/96
- B. Interview with group G through K, 1/10/96
- C. Interview with group L through O, 1/8/96
- D. Interview with T, 2/6/96
- E. Interview with W, 2/6/96
- F. Interview with R. 2/7/96
- G. Interview with X, 2/7/96
- H. Interview with U through V, 2/21/96
- I. Interview with Q, 3/5/96
- J. Interview with Z, 3/5/96
- K. Interview with S, 4/17/96
- L. Interview with P, 4/29/96
- M. Interview with Y, 4/29/96

II. List of Other Sources

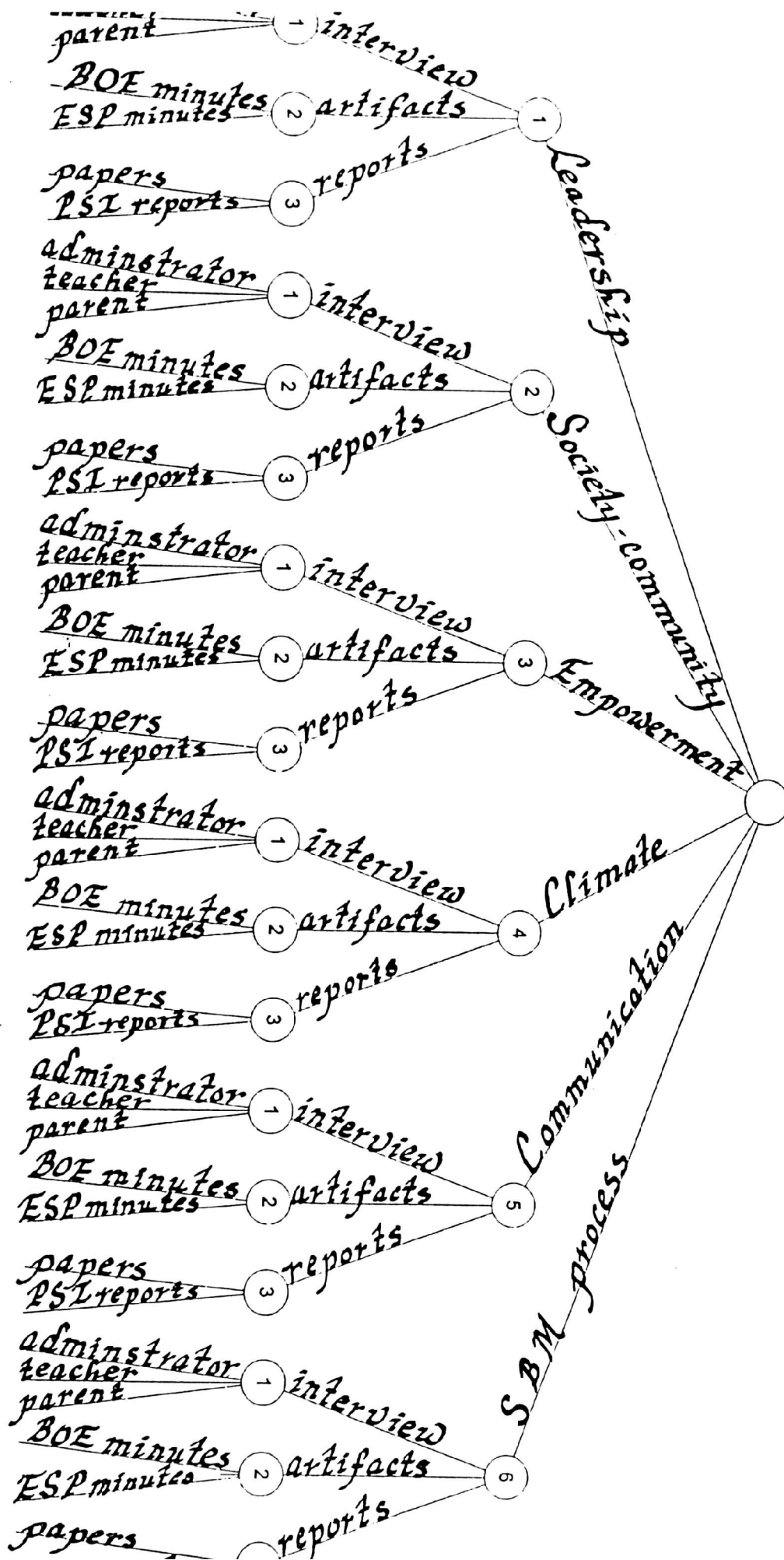
- A. League of Professional School Report, 3/17/93
- B. League of Professional School Report, 4/25/91
- C. League of Professional School Report, 2/3/92
- D. League of Professional School Report, 2/7/95
- E. League of Professional School Report, 2/6/96
- F. League Planning Document, 1/19/90
- G. NOVA University Document, 1993
- H. Excellent School Program Team Minutes, 1990-1996
- I. Personal Communications with AA, 3/6/95
- J. Personal Communications with Q, April 1994

K. Reviewed Board of Education Minutes from 1985-1996

L. Researcher's Field Notes, 3/29/94, 4/27/94, 10/3/94,
10/6/94, 10/6/94, 11/7/94, 11/28/94, 12/27/94,
3/6/95, 6/6/95, 11/6/95, 1/8/96, 1/9/96, 1/10/96,
2/6/96, 2/7/96, 3/5/96, 4/15/96, 4/29/96, 6/4/96,
8/12/96

APPENDIX B

Index System
for
QSR.NUDIST



APPENDIX C

Approval Letter from
the Institutional Review Board

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

September 6, 1995

Ms. Linda McQuaig
Department of Educational Leadership, Technology, and Research
L.B. 8143
Georgia Southern University

Dear Ms. McQuaig:

I have reviewed your proposed study entitled "Implementing Site-Based Management in the Rural South: The Process and the Challenge." After reviewing the proposal, the interview questions, and the informed consent cover letter, it appears that only minimal risk exists for the research subjects. I am, therefore, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board able to certify that adequate provisions have been planned to protect the rights of the human research subjects.

However, prior to data collection, please modify your informed consent cover letter by providing an estimate of how long the interview will last and by noting that participants may refuse to answer particular questions and/or to have their answers deleted from the written transcripts. Also please change the final sentence of the fourth paragraph of your informed consent cover letter to read as follows:

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Tom Case, Chair, GSU Institutional Review Board, L.B 8152, (912) 681-5205.

Please submit a copy of the revised informed consent cover letter so that the IRB file for this investigation will be complete.

In circumstances change or unforeseen events occur, please notify the IRB immediately. Upon completion of your research notify the IRB so that your file may be closed.

Wish you every success with this and future research efforts.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Case

Thomas L. Case, PhD, Chair
Institutional Review Board
Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Individual interviews were semistructured
and Group and Parent/Community Member
interviews were unstructured.

Individual Interview

1. Tell me how Optima Elementary became involved with shared governance.
2. Prior to joining the League, did Optima have a school improvement team?
3. Tell me about LSAC (Local School Advisory Committee).
4. Describe how the information about the League was disseminated to the staff.
5. Tell me about concerns or feelings expressed by the faculty as you considered joining the League.
6. Once the decision was made to join the League, how did the faculty decide which staff members would be on the ESPT?
7. Tell me about the PSI Task Force.
8. Describe how decisions were made at this school prior to shared governance.
9. Tell me about forming the mission statement and writing the charter.
10. Describe the line of communication used to keep the staff aware of what takes place at the ESPT meetings.
11. What changes have taken place since you joined the League?
12. Tell me about the Optima community and its level of involvement in the school.

Group Interview Questions

1. Tell me how Optima Elem. became involved with shared governance.
2. Describe how the information about shared governance was disseminated to the staff.
3. Could you describe the staffs' feelings as your school began discussing altering the management structure?
4. Tell me about the forming of the first leadership team.
5. Describe how decisions were made at this school prior to shared governance.
6. Tell me about changes you have observed since you joined the League.
7. Describe what type of leader is needed to instigate shared governance.
8. Tell me about the Optima community and its level of involvement in the school.
9. What is the perception of the other schools in the system toward Optima Elem. and its participation in the League?

The following questions were added after the first group interview.

10. Tell me about the Local School Advisory Committee.
11. Prior to joining the League, did Optima have a school improvement team?

Group Interview (continued)

12. Once the decision was made to join the League, how did the faculty decide which staff members would be on the ESP Team?
13. Tell me about the PSI Task Force.
14. Describe the line of communication used to keep the staff aware of what takes place at the ESP meetings.
15. Describe how Optima has changed since 1989.

Parent/Community Member Interview

1. How long have you lived in the Optima community?
2. Tell me about your involvement with Optima Elementary.
3. Have you had children attend the school?
4. Tell me about the Optima community and its people.
5. What kind of impact did consolidation have on the community and the school?
6. From your perspective, what do you see as Optima Elementary's greatest strength?
7. Tell me about parent and community involvement at Optima Elementary.
8. Does the Optima community have influence/input into educational decisions made at the Board of Education that concern Optima?

APPENDIX E

Permission to Interview

September 12, 1995

[Superintendent's Name]
Superintendent
Creek County Schools
LaMont, GA 31516

Dear [Superintendent's Name],

I am the principal at Bacon County Primary School in Alma. This letter is to request permission to conduct a qualitative research project investigating the implementation of Shared Governance at Optima. I would like to begin the formal collection of data in September 1995 and should conclude during the summer of 1996. Data collection will include making audiotapes, interviewing members of the staff, keeping written notes of observations, and collecting documents which pertain to the implementation of the Shared Governance Plan.

Participation in the study will be voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, may refuse to answer particular questions and/or request that their answers be deleted from the written transcripts. Each interview will last approximately an hour. **All information will be kept strictly confidential. The name of the school and all participants will be changed to protect the identities.**

If you have questions about the study, you may contact me at (912)632-4765. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Tom Case, Chair, GSU Institutional Review Board, L.B. 8152, (912) 681-5205.

This study could provide other administrators insight into what to expect as they attempt to make substantial changes through a shared governance process. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda McQuaig

September 12, 1995

Dear (Participant's Name),

My name is Linda McQuaig and I am the principal at Bacon County Primary School in Alma. As part of my requirement for completion of my Education Doctorate Degree, I am very interested in studying a shared governance initiative in an elementary school.

At Optima Elementary, you have implemented a new governance structure which I would like to study. My dissertation will focus on the process that schools must go through in order to accomplish such a change. Studying changes which you have made at your school will provide other schools with a practice-based example to review as they embark on their own journey of change.

This letter is to request your permission to interview you as a participant. Participating in the study will give you the opportunity to tell your story regarding the process your staff went through during the implementation of shared governance and relate what changes have actually occurred as a result of shared governance. **Please be assured that all information will be kept confidential.** The name of the school as well as all participants in the study will be masked. The interviews will be recorded and later transcribed into written form. Each interview should last approximately an hour. As a participant, you may refuse to answer particular questions and/or request that answers be deleted from the written transcript. At any time during the study you may withdraw your participation without penalty.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact me at (912)632-4291. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Tom Case, Chair, GSU Institutional Review Board, L.B. 8152, (912) 681-5205.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research project. The results should be very informative for other schools attempting to change their governance structures.

Respectfully,

Linda McQuaig